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Think tank accuses 10 Middlebury alumni of fraudulent voting, officials say claims are unfounded

Of the 10 alumni implicated, five were U.S. citizens living abroad and legally allowed to vote in the last state in which they registered, three had remained in Vermont following graduation, and two are being reviewed, election officials said

By EMILY HOGAN
Layout Editor

In early April, the Ethan Allen Institute (EAI), a conservative think tank in Vermont, alleged that ten Middlebury graduates voted in the state in the 2020 election though they were no longer eligible to vote in Vermont. The students had not been removed from the voter rolls upon graduating, and the EAI argued this proved that state voter rolls are not up to date. The Vermont Secretary of State and Middlebury Town Clerk say that these claims are unfounded.

WCAX, a television station in Burlington, aired the EAI's allegations on April 5 but ran a follow-up story on April 6, in which state and local election officials refuted the voter fraud claims.

Meg Hansen, president of the EAI, sent an email to Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos at 3:14 p.m. on April 4, sharing the findings of their investigation of Middlebury's voter roll. Condos responded to the allegations in a 12:51 p.m. email on April 5, and the EAI's claims were published on WCAX's website at 4:20 p.m. on April 5. According to Middlebury Town Clerk Ann Webster — the presiding election official for the town — WCAX did not reach out to her or Condos for comment prior to airing the segment.

In her email, Hansen explained the EAI's research methodology.

"We chose the years 2015–19 for this investigation because there was a good chance that these students had registered to vote in the 2016 and 2018 elections, and upon graduating, we suspected that they may not have been removed from Middlebury's voter roll," she said. "Voter rolls in Vermont have not been cleaned in decades."

According to a post on their website, the EAI found the alleged irregularities by using lists of graduating students and Middlebury citizens who voted in 2020, and cross-referencing this information with alumni's LinkedIn profiles.

Condos challenged Hansen's statements, arguing for the validity of elections and informing Hansen

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STUDENT FACING FOUR CHARGES, INCLUDING HATE MOTIVATED CRIME, FOLLOWING REPORTED ASSAULT

By TONY SJODIN
Senior News Editor

Public Safety received a report of an assault on campus at 11:26 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, which was reported to students, staff and faculty in an email approximately an hour later. Officers from the Middlebury Police Department (MPD) responded to the incident at around 11:40 p.m. and spoke to the reported victim, Matthew Shanklin '25, according to a press release from MPD issued at 1 p.m. on April 27.

According to the press release, Shanklin, 22, told MPD officers, "he had been 'jumped' by a group of 6-10 black students." In a subsequent investigation by MPD, "it was determined that Shanklin had allegedly been the aggressor and had assaulted a group of students after making racially charged statements to them," according to the press release. This was determined after the involved parties were interviewed by MPD.

Shanklin has been issued a citation to appear in the Vermont Superior Court Criminal Division to answer for four charges: simple assault, aggravated disorderly conduct, hate motivated crime and false information to a police officer. Shanklin is to appear in court on June 20 at 12:30 p.m.

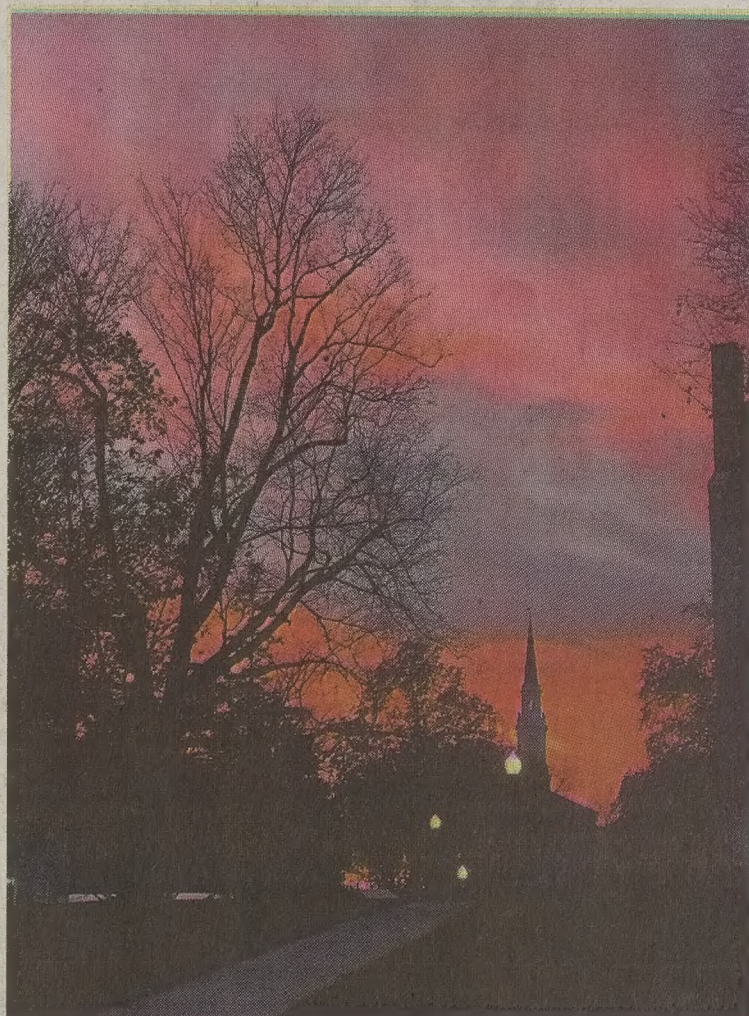
As of press time, the college has not announced the identity of any of the students involved, including Shanklin, in correspondence sent to all students and employees about the incident, or in direct emails to The Campus.

In an email sent after midnight on April 24, Associate Director of Public Safety Keith E. Ellery said that a student was reportedly assaulted by a group of individuals, but that the identity and description of the group was unknown at the time. The student was taken by Middlebury Regional Emergency Medical Services to Porter Medical Center for treatment.

The MPD press release said

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PHOTO OF THE WEEK



ZEYI TONG '25

Sunset over Chapel Hill.

College to celebrate LGBTQ+ students at first Lavender Graduation

By ORLY BERKE
Contributing Writer

Middlebury will host its first Lavender Graduation ceremony this year to honor the achievements of queer and transgender students during their time in college. The ceremony will be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11 in Wilson Hall for LGBTQIA+ students from the classes of 2022 and 2022.5.

Lavender graduations have been held at colleges around the country since 1995, with over 115 colleges already celebrating lavender graduations annually. With no connection to official graduation, these ceremonies are a time for queer and transgender students to receive special recognition that they may not receive otherwise.

"This ceremony is intended to be a reclamation of Middlebury as their own — a final ode to their perseverance, achievements and explorations as LGBTQIA+ Middlebury students," Assistant Director of the Anderson Freeman Resource Center Janae Due wrote in an email to students.

The use of the word lavender to describe LGBTQIA+ events and subjects is related to the color's importance in queer history. It originated from the color combination of the pink triangles gay men were forced to wear and the black triangles that lesbians were forced to wear in concentration camps in Nazi Germany. "The LGBTQ civil rights movement took these symbols of hatred and combined them to make symbols and color of pride and community," according to the Human Rights Campaign.

There will be a welcome address by President Laurie Patton, a dinner, a speech by Bella Costantino-Carrigan '22, recognition of the graduates

and, finally, students will receive a lavender stole. Graduates will be able to invite students, faculty and staff of the college, although no members outside of Middlebury will be allowed to attend.

Janae Due is in charge of both Lavender Graduation and the ceremony for first-generation students. Due said when they first arrived in the fall of 2019, "creating a Lavender Graduation ceremony at Middlebury was a big priority. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their goals were postponed until an in-person ceremony could commence. While a virtual Lavender ceremony may have been possible in 2020, Due did not want to hold the first ceremony at Middlebury online instead of an in-person space.

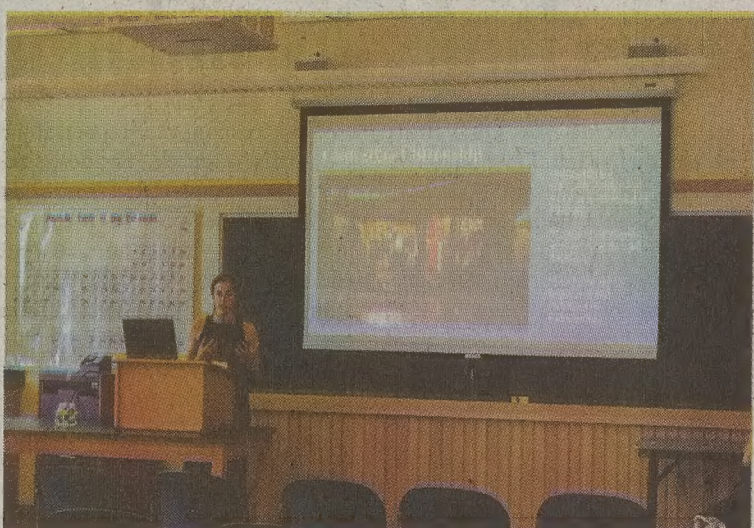
"It's just a lot more personalized and specific to the journey that queer and trans students may have had here at Middlebury," Due said.

Meg Haberle '22 looks forward to attending the college's first Lavender Graduation ceremony.

"I haven't been super involved in a lot of the queer orgs on campus," Haberle said. "But it's a universal part of my identity, and it's nice to be able to be a part of that."

Other efforts to support LGBTQIA+ students on campus are in progress, including the creation of two new buildings specifically for LGBTQIA+ students. The first is the Prism Center, which will be an affinity space center and lounge where queer and transgender students may find a safe area to congregate as well as provide education and outreach for students, faculty and staff. It is supposed to open in the fall of 2023 in a restructured 23 Adirondack View. The second building will be the Effervescence House which will be an affinity housing space for queer and trans students of color. Due says that although the change may be slow, systematically this institutional support will help to build a brighter future for LGBTQIA+ students at Middlebury.

Spring Symposium 2022



EMMANUEL TAMRAT/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Spring Student Symposium returned in person for the first time since spring 2019 on Friday, April 22. Students gathered in the Great Hall of Bicentennial Hall to learn about their peers' work (top). Ciara Burke '22 (middle) and Lily Laesch '23 (bottom) presented their research in poster presentations and oral presentations respectively.

NEWS

Student volunteers call abortion centers for FiveThirtyEight study on wait times

By AMANDA MANOOGIAN

How the course schedule comes together

By SABRINA SALAM

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LOCAL

Ilsley Library hosts Earth Day green cleaning event

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN

Jack Clarner '24 founds Equipme, an online rental marketplace for outdoor equipment

By BLAISE SIEFER

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OPINIONS

Let's show up in solidarity with farmworkers: May 1 action with migrant justice (go/maydayaction/)

By ANDRES OYAGA and MOLLY BABBIN

Join us outside the Middlebury Hanaford this Sunday May 1 at 11:30 a.m. alongside farmworkers...

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ARTS & CULTURE

TEDxMiddlebury finds growth in failure

By ELIZA KING FREEDMAN

"Ophelia Underwater" rewrites a Shakespearean classic

By SOPHIE BUTLER-RAHMAN

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SPORTS

Alec Ritch '23 helps baseball to 11-game win streak, a program record

By RYAN HEINZERLING

Women's tennis sweeps weekend, charges toward NESCAC tournament

By LEXI LINAFELTER

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Nationwide non-dairy milk shortage limits options in Crossroads, dining halls

By BEA PARR
Contributing Writer

When students went to place their Crossroads orders two weeks ago, many left empty handed due to national non-dairy milk shortages. These shortages extended to the dining halls: at Ross, the milk refrigerator was empty, and at Proctor, the fridge housed a lonely carton of soy milk. Only Atwater carried most of its usual non-dairy milk selection.

For Crossroads, the shortages were the worst on Monday, April 11. Crossroads employee Sofia Morris '25 worked the 6 to 8 p.m. shift that day.

"The only milk we had was soy milk and half-and-half. We were also out of lavender syrup, mango for smoothies and ice cream for milkshakes," Morris said. "That made the options quite limited, and if you got an espresso drink, you couldn't even really put milk in it unless you wanted soy milk or half and half."

The shortages slowed business that evening.

"People would come up and try to start ordering and see the sign that we were out of certain things. They'd keep looking for something they might want that fit the ingredients we had, and sometimes they ordered something," Morris said.

Michele Young '22, back of house manager for Crossroads, said all the college's retail services order together, but none were receiving non-dairy milks those weeks.

"Anytime we would put in an order for non-dairy milks, the milk just would not arrive. It was really frustrating," Young said. "There was nothing any of the Middlebury workers could do to prevent it or fix it because it just had something to do with the supplier."

Some students ordered lattes with half-and-half or soy milk, others ordered berry blaster smoothies, which do not require milk or bananas, but many did not order anything at all, according to Morris. Students asked when the ingredients were coming back, but Crossroads employees didn't know the answer themselves.

These shortages were particularly frustrating for students who are lactose intolerant, like track athlete Athena Nooney '25. "Last week, I wanted to get a chai latte with oat milk and they were like, 'Oh, sorry, we are out of every non-dairy milk,' so I got regular milk and had some severe tummy troubles on my run," Nooney said.

Other students got resourceful to avoid changing their orders. Audrey Park '23, who interns for Dining Services, said she "heard about people bringing their own bananas from Proc to Crossroads."

The milk shortage was not due to an issue with placing orders but was because of a nation-wide issue. "One thing that I think is hard is that everyone is blaming Middlebury and the dining halls for it but it is due to national milk shortages," Park said.

Morris said that most students were understanding of these issues.

"Most people were pretty understanding especially because the dining halls didn't have non-dairy milk, so it wasn't just a Crossroads problem, it was a national problem."

Morris was not too concerned about the long-term impact these shortages had on Crossroads as a business.

"We did still make a fair amount of drinks, particularly Berry Blasters, and that brought in a good amount of revenue during the shift," Morris said. And, ingredient stock is already improving. As of now, Crossroads has a regular stock of everything, and non-dairy milks are slowly returning to Ross and Proctor.

Student volunteers call abortion centers for FiveThirtyEight study on wait times

By AMANDA MANOOGIAN
Contributing Writer

A group of 17 Middlebury students volunteered this past March for a FiveThirtyEight Research Project on abortion wait times for clinics across the U.S. The team, which was led by Professor of Economics Caitlin Myers, dedicated upwards of 10 hours each over the course of two Mondays in order to call 737 abortion clinics in 46 states, as well as the District of Columbia, to ask the date of the next appointment for an abortion.

On April 18, FiveThirtyEight published the article, titled "It Can Already Take Weeks To Get An Abortion," and credited the Middlebury students by name. Prior to the calls, students went to a required training session, in which they learned during which hours to call the abortion centers, and were given a script that included what date would make them six weeks pregnant on the day they called. They also set up fake phone numbers through Google Voice and were given the option to create a fake name in order to protect their identities throughout the process.

As the students called the centers on Monday March 7 and 14, they entered the data into a Google Sheet, as well as taking notes on paper. Anthony Marinello '22 was tasked with cross checking the information.

Last September, the Supreme Court upheld legislation in Texas

that highly restricted abortion access. Ever since, clinics in the surrounding states have been overwhelmed by the demand for abortions.

Elsa Korpi '22, one of the researchers, spoke about a particularly disheartening experience with the lone abortion clinic in Missouri. At first, she was on hold with them for 20 minutes. After that attempt, she called the clinic once more.

"Professor Myers told me that she really wanted that data point, so I gave it another try. I was on hold again for 45 minutes," Korpi said. When she finally got through to the clinic, they told her to try a clinic in a nearby state such as Illinois.

While Korpi's call was only for research purposes, she emphasized how this can be a real scenario for many women. For many women, especially those of lower socioeconomic status, it can be unrealistic to travel long distances for an abortion.

"Imagine doing that when you're actually pregnant and you know this might be your only option," Korpi said.

Attention has recently focused on Texas and its neighboring states, but clinics all over the country had long wait times. Audrey Peiker '24, expressed her surprise when historically "blue" states without heavy restrictions on abortions had long wait times. For example, the data showed that wait times of a week or more are fairly common even in California.

"I learned to stop going off my biases," Peiker said. "Calling a Southern state doesn't always mean longer wait times and calling a state like California doesn't guarantee an

appointment."

The Supreme Court is preparing to rule on a challenge to Roe v. Wade, the landmark Supreme Court case that legalized abortion in the U.S., in June 2022. The article in FiveThirtyEight explains that clinics are already overwhelmed with abortions and are seeing out-of-state patients at unprecedented levels; overturning Roe would further exacerbate the already long wait times.

"What I hope this [study] helps people realize is that the abortion landscape across the U.S. could change rapidly," Frieda Violet Thaveethu '22, one of the student researchers and an economics major writing her thesis about abortion legislation.

She also mentioned "trigger bans," which are laws that would automatically ban first- and second-trimester abortions in certain states if Roe v. Wade is overturned. Thirteen states already have trigger bans passed, and several more bans are up for consideration in state legislatures.

Myers hopes to continue researching abortion waittimes following the June 2022 decision.

"Abortion access has the potential to change rapidly," she said. "This research crucially depends on Middlebury students being interested in participating."

For more information about future research and women's rights issues, students can sign up for the Chellis House mailing list.

Editor's Note: Katie Futterman '24, one of the student volunteers, is a news editor for The Campus.

STUDENT FACING FOUR CHARGES, INCLUDING HATE MOTIVATED CRIME, FOLLOWING REPORTED ASSAULT

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that Shanklin reportedly suffered injuries to his leg.

"The incident does not appear to be bias related and the injuries to the student are identified as minor," Ellery wrote in an email update sent to students and employees on April 24 at 2:14 a.m., before the press release outlining the charges was released days later. An email from Ellery sent the following afternoon identified the investigation as a joint effort between MPD and Public Safety.

Public Safety "does not believe that there is an ongoing threat to our community" based on the investigation at that point, Ellery said in his most recent email update to the Middlebury community, sent April 24 at 2:28 p.m.

The Campus followed up with

Public Safety for comment on April 26 and received an email response at 2:46 on April 27 after the release of the press release from MPD. In that response Director of Public Safety Demetria Kirby said the investigation is ongoing and no new information was available at that time.

Kirby's email also provided information about "Clery Crimes," incidents that are determined to "present a continuing threat to students and/or employees." According to Kirby, the name "Clery Crimes" comes from the Clery Act, which requires Timely Warnings to be issued after certain incidents occur on or around college campuses.

In addition, the email emphasized that members of the Middlebury community should report crimes to the Department of Public Safety as soon as possible after they occur,

and included a list of both reporting options and confidential resources.

The Campus then asked Kirby for additional comments in light of the press release. College Director of Media Relations Sarah Ray sent an email response.

"Our Public Safety Department responded to this incident and referred the case to the Middlebury Police Department, which conducted an investigation. Questions about the police investigation should be directed to MPD. Matters of student discipline are not public due to privacy laws," Ray said. The Campus reached out to Shanklin after the MPD press release was sent out. He did not respond by the press time of 5:30 p.m. on April 27.

This is a developing story. Check middleburycampus.com for updates.

Think tank accuses 10 Middlebury alumni of fraudulent voting, officials say claims are unfounded

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of the work that the town clerk and Board of Civil Authority volunteers do to ensure a recent checklist of voters.

"By law, [Boards of Civil Authority] are required to perform a name-by-name review of the voter checklist every two years," Condos replied.

In response to the EAI's allegations, Webster sent back her findings, cross-referencing the names given by the EAI with her checklist and voter registrations. Webster checked whether or not the individuals had been sent a ballot, if the Town Clerk's office had received one back, where the voter sent this ballot and more information to confirm that the former students did not vote fraudulently.

"Most of it was pretty easy research," she said.

Of the ten students accused of voting fraudulently, five were previous college students who had graduated and now live abroad. Webster explained that any registered voter who moves to or lives in a foreign country as an American citizen stays registered

in the last place they registered to vote. So, although they may live abroad, the students were still legally allowed to vote in the 2020 Middlebury election. Webster also explained that some of the students implicated in the EAI's allegations had graduated but were still living in Middlebury and therefore eligible to vote, and only two of the contested votes still require review.

One of these two, according to Webster, was the product of an error involving an in-person vote cast by a current Middlebury resident with the same name as a former Middlebury student. Election officials mistakenly checked off the name of the former Middlebury student in the "participation report" that gets sent to the state. This document is accessible to researchers, but is not the same as the legal record of votes, Webster explained, which would still have the correct information about the identity of the voter. The former Middlebury student did not vote in the election, Webster said.

Webster also explained that Vermont law has clear guidelines for the process of removing someone from the voter roll.

"There is a fairly long process to take people off the rolls and you

can't just decide like 'Oh I think this person has left, I'm gonna take them off,'" Webster said. "You have to send them a letter, and if they respond to it, then you can update your records based on that. If they don't respond, you have to wait until two general elections have passed without them voting before you can take them off. So it can be up to four years depending on when they actually get challenged if they don't get back in touch."

Webster said she invites examination of elections and voter rolls from watchdog organizations and individuals, but she had concerns about the EAI's approach.

"I think what I found distressing was that they sent it also to the WCAX and put it out on public media before they had done what I considered to be their homework and checking up on these things," Webster told The Campus.

According to Webster, some of the recent checking of voter irregularities — like that conducted by the EAI — may stem from the continued allegations of fraudulency in the 2020 presidential election.

Webster expressed distress over the allegations. "I think it's a shame to put doubt during this, as I say, political atmosphere," she said.

In his response to Hansen about the EAI's research, Condos said, "Your statement that 'Voter rolls in Vermont have not been cleaned in decades' is simply not accurate, and frankly lazy. It is this kind of hyperbole that is causing undue mistrust of our elections."

Normally, Webster said she would welcome the checks and balances that independent organizations provide in order to ensure a democratic voting process. But allegations of voter irregularities are very rare, and Webster believes the intention of the EAI is not only to clarify the democracy of the voting process, but to sway public attitude towards mistrust and fear.

"In Vermont it's very good in my opinion that every effort is made to make sure that people who are legally authorized to vote have the opportunity to do that," she said.

Jason Duquette-Hoffman, advisor to MiddVotes — a student organization at the Center for Community Engagement — shed light on Middlebury's process for facilitating voting on campus. The student-led, nonpartisan voter organization aims to provide students with the information and resources to engage in democracy and hopes to foster students' inclination to do so, Duquette-

Hoffman said.

"So most of our efforts on campus are really around voter registration. So [we're] making sure that students are registered to vote wherever they choose to register according to where they're eligible," Duquette-Hoffman said.

While many students choose to register in their hometowns, Duquette-Hoffman said some choose to register to vote in Middlebury instead. On election day, the organization runs shuttles to the polls so that transportation is not a limiting factor in voter participation.

In a national election year, MiddVotes typically starts their programming to encourage and provide resources for student registration in the fall semester leading up to the election in November.

"We're part of a number of coalitions of higher ed institutions who are supporting students in voting — so we submit a democratic action plan as part of our participation as one of those coalitions, usually in the spring before the election year," Duquette-Hoffman said.

Duquette-Hoffman and MiddVotes are currently working on a plan this semester for the 2022 election midterms.

HOW THE COURSE SCHEDULE COMES TOGETHER:

Faculty, departments and coordinators plan for hundreds of classes

By **SABRINA SALAM**
Contributing Writer

Every semester, students piece together a semester's worth of courses from hundreds of offerings across every department at the college — the product of a long scheduling process that involves all faculty, academic departments, the Dean of Curriculum's office and the Registrar.

The process typically starts with faculty, who rank the time slots and classrooms they want for their courses. These rankings are then passed to their respective department chairs and academic coordinators.

"As the department chair, I coordinate which classes my department will offer, including the schedule and room assignments of those classes," David Allen, department chair of Biology, said. "This is supported by the hard work of the Biology Department Coordinator Missey Thompson, the BiHall Administrative Coordinator Cathy Ekstrom, the Curriculum Information Specialist Diane Burnham and Kerrin Hoff at the registrar."

Departments consider not only the scheduling of the courses to be offered in the following semester, but also a long-term plan for what the department will offer.

"For the Biology Department, the chair makes a rough three-year plan of courses to be taught," Allen said. "This is shared with department faculty members and adjusted based on their feedback. Then in January each faculty member enters the courses they will teach in the next academic year."

For new classes, faculty and

the Curriculum Committee work together to make each class a reality. According to Grace Spatafora, dean of curriculum, faculty who wish to teach a new course must submit a proposal to the Curriculum Committee for review.

"The committee reviews the proposals and may make suggestions before approving the course description and the associated distribution and or cultures and civilizations tags," Spatafora said.

Some departments have their own additional methods of creating course schedules.

Both the Biology and Computer Science Departments strive to provide two introductory courses every semester. The Biology department strives to teach all of the required classes for Biology majors and the other majors the department supports every year.

The Computer Science Department takes a similar approach.

"Classes needed for the major do get priority," Matthew Dickerson, department chair of Computer Science, said. "Without them, we will have students who have declared the CSCI [Computer Science] major who can't actually complete it."

According to Spatafora, course schedules are then passed onto Course Scheduling, where the schedule is then evaluated based on feasibility.

While departments try to provide as many seats as needed, some struggle to do so.

"Unfortunately, we have been understaffed in our department," Dickerson said. "So even with us all teaching well [beyond] the expected number of students per year, we always end up being short somewhere."

There are also some



ABIGAIL CHANG/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

requirements and restrictions that play a role in the academic schedule creation process. According to Hoff, much of this information can be found on the Office of Registrar section of the Middlebury College website, where the registrar provides professors and faculty with a page of guidelines and FAQs about course scheduling such as time slots available, distribution of class times, priority guidelines used by the course scheduler and more.

The Middlebury College Student Handbook under "Course Registration and Conduct of Courses" is also a useful source to learn more about these guidelines.

For example, under the "Distribution" section of the

Guidelines and FAQs page, it states, "Departments must offer 1

"Even with us all teaching well [beyond] the expected number of students per year, we always end up being short somewhere."

out of 11 of their lecture sections in the 8:00 a.m. Mon-Wed-Fri and 8:00 Tu-Th time blocks (no change

from current policy)."

The amount of seats in a class is determined by the course instructor.

In the Biology Department, they "try to balance enrollment pressure with the class size that best supports the learning environment," Allen explained. They also consider "the physical constraints of classrooms, lab space or equipment, and seats in 15-passenger vans for classes with field labs."

"A faculty member may choose to respond to student demand by increasing the enrollment cap (but not at the expense of sacrificing pedagogy) or by offering an additional section of a course," Spatafora said.



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A guide to hiking Vermont in mud season



Midd FIRE on a hike in April 2022.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELISE CHAN

By JULIA PEPPER
Local Editor

As temperatures rise in Middlebury, students and locals alike can be seen spending time outside and enjoying the sun, as long walks, icy plunges and hikes become more common. Although one might equate warmer temperatures with ideal hiking conditions, that's not quite the case, because spring in Vermont often means mud season.

"Mud Season is the period between winter and spring where thawing occurs, and is informally referred to as Vermont's fifth season," according to an article by the Green Mountain Club. Mud season typically lasts from late March or

early April to early June.

As the article explains, the mudiness is due to Vermont's winter season. As with other northeastern states, long winters provide time for the ground soil to freeze up to 60–70 inches deep. Then, once temperatures rise, surface level frozen ground thaws and releases water.

More than just creating a mess for hikers, hiking during mud season can actually damage trails. Foot traffic on muddy trails can lead to soil compaction, leading to denser, less aerated soil. This makes it harder for water to drain into the soil, making plants work harder to push through.

"Long term, this degrades the quality of the trail by reducing its ability to absorb water, which causes increased flooding later. It also makes it harder for vegetation to grow," according to Green Mountain Club.

Club.

Elise Chan '24, a leader of FIRE and head guide for Middlebury Mountain Club, gave guidelines for traversing mud and puddles while walking.

"If you go around, it widens the trail, and has a greater impact. That's why having great shoes is important, because you're going to have to walk straight through some mud," Chan said.

When asked for her craziest hiking-during-mud-season story, Chan recalled one hike at Widow's Clearing, near the recreation center at Moosalamoo, where it was so muddy she pulled her shoes off and walked around in her socks.

Asked for the best footwear for hiking during mud season, Chan suggested hiking boots or running shoes and recommended hosing them down after. Waterproof socks

are also great, she said. The college gear room has waterproof hiking boots available for free, which can be accessed at [go/gear](#).

What should college students do with muddy clothes when they get back to their dorms? Laying them out on a ledge, hosing shoes down, stuffing them with newspaper to help them dry, and even washing socks in the shower could be a good place to start, Chan suggested.

She emphasized that students should do some research before going on hikes, to determine which trails are open during mud season. She recommended using [trailfinder.info](#), a resource for hikes in Vermont and New Hampshire. Navigating to trail status after clicking "find trails" in the menu tab allows for people to sift through which trails are open, partially open and closed.

Trails may be closed for other reasons besides mud, Chan added. A lot of trails, such as Snake Mountain and Rattlesnake ledge, close for peregrine falcon or other birds nesting.

Rather than closing-off options, having more information about proper trail usage ensures trails are protected for future hikers, and that the best paths are chosen.

Reflecting on the aspects of hiking she particularly enjoys, Chan spoke about the land.

"It makes me feel more connected to this area, and it makes Middlebury feel like home, which is important given how much time we spend here," she said. "I'm super connected to the landscape where I live [in Seattle] ... and that's

"It makes me feel more connected to this area, and it makes Middlebury feel like home, which is important given how much time we spend here."

something really important to me. It's cool to get off campus, and see what's around here. I feel more like a person," she said.

Mary Nagy-Benson '24.5, is currently enrolled in Environmental Geology, a class that goes on labs in nature to see geologic features discussed in class, like the formation of mountains and different soil sediments.

"I love being able to see what we learn about in person and really engage with the material," she said, adding that it's special to have a geologist explain various geologic features seen during labs.

"My favorite part about going on hikes in general is taking a step out of daily life and feeling so enveloped in nature and non-human systems," Nagy-Benson said.

Middlebury Mountain Club, as well as FIRE, provide guided opportunities for a plethora of outdoor activities, including hiking. Opportunities and more information can be found at [go/ideal](#) and [go/bipocrec](#).

Ilsley Library hosts Earth Day green cleaning event

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Contributing Writer

On Friday, April 22, in honor of Earth Day, the Ilsley Public Library hosted a Green Cleaning event where attendees could create their own DIY, environmentally-friendly household cleaning products. The sample-sized materials and recipes for laundry detergent, tub scrub and dishwasher detergent were provided to participants, who had the opportunity to come and follow the instructions to make their own products in reusable jars. The main ingredients were basic household items such as baking soda, liquid soap, Borax and optional essential oils to add some scent, making the recipes easy to find and recreate at home.

Renee Urissiti, a programing librarian, curated this event. She said her inspiration came from her perception of the universality of cleaning.

"[I] was thinking about Earth Day and wanting to do something earth-friendly, and it occurred to me that everybody cleans, even people like me who hate to do it. You still have to, so let's think about how to do it in a better way."

Cleaning products contain thousands of chemicals that are not tested for safety, and which take a dangerously long time to degrade, polluting streams and rivers, harming aquatic life and entering the food chain. U.S. News identifies Vermont as the greenest state; however, the damage from cleaning products is still often overlooked by residents. The plastic containers used for each product are non-recyclable in some cases, creating additional waste. These are the larger issues that making one's own products from natural ingredients and using reusable jars can help resolve.

The event drew patrons in for a variety of reasons — some showed up intentionally, while others stumbled upon it during a trip to the library. One participant, Lois Myers, came in with her children, seeking out an Earth Day activity, and the library was their first stop. "I like things that teach us something and are close by and good for the planet," she said. "I was really curious about more recipes for different cleaners," she added.

Each patron left the event with a packet of ingredients to keep handy and recipes for a variety of household cleaning products, such as carpet deodorizer, tub scrub, mattress cleaner and more. One patron had recently found out her sister is allergic to ingredients in conventional cleaning

products, so the activity included additional benefits.

Urissiti's goal was to show people how easy it can be to DIY their cleaning products. "I thought that if I had people come in and see how easy it is and see how all the products we're using to make the cleaning agents are all readily available at a grocery store, if they came in and they made it and saw how easy it was to do and to get all the ingredients, maybe they'd go home and keep doing it," Urissiti said.

Patrons felt that the ability to make the products and know what was going into them also granted a certain autonomy over the materials they are incorporating into their daily lives, and a sense of independence — one of the participants noted feeling like a scientist.

The library will continue its string of earth-related or thematic activities — Renee hopes to hold at least two bigger events a month. For Arbor Day on Friday, May 6, they are launching a program where patrons can participate in a tree scavenger hunt, with a six-inch tree sapling as the prize. Both children and adults are welcome to participate. Part of their mission is clearly to put sustainable and earth-friendly materials and opportunities into the hands of locals to inspire them to make a difference in their daily lives.



MADELEINE KAPTEIN/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Patrons at the Green Cleaning event make their own home cleaning products.

Jack Clarner '24 founds Equipme, an online rental marketplace for outdoor equipment

By BLAISE SEIFER
Senior Sports Editor

A life-long Vermont resident, Jack Clarner '24 grew up outdoors. When the sun was out, you could find Clarner surfing, sailing, mountain biking — you name it. Clarner was fortunate to own his own outdoor gear but understood the many barriers to owning it. Outdoor equipment is expensive, difficult to store and tough to transport.

But what if there was an online marketplace for renting outdoor equipment? Think of an Airbnb for kayaks, paddle boards and other gear. Enter Equipme, Clarner's up-and-coming business that unites outdoor equipment owners and renters. "I wanted to make these types of sports that I fell in love with more accessible to everyone," Clarner told The Campus. "Being out in nature and harnessing that energy is such a fun way to spend time — I wish everyone could have these same experiences that I've had, and that's ultimately my goal with Equipme."

There are other companies who have tried to do something similar. The Saratoga Springs, New York, Shurable has a similar concept, but their platform has very few listings. Other competitors include Friend-With-A and SpinLister. Instead of seeing competitors as a barrier, Clarner said he sees their presence as a chance to learn. Last summer, Clarner began to think of ways in which he could make these sports he loved more widely accessible. He was confident in the rise in online marketplaces and was energized by the prospect of starting his own business. "Being an avid outdoor adventurer and lover of all sports, a platform like Equipme is exactly what I've been missing from my childhood up until now," Clarner

said. "A place where I can make money on all the equipment I don't use enough and simultaneously go rent a paddleboard on some remote lake up in Vermont is a dream come true. I think my selfish desire to use this platform is why I'm the guy for the job." This past J-term, Clarner put his idea to the test, enrolling in MiddEntrepreneurs, an entrepreneurship course taught by Sam Roach-Gerber and David Bradbury of the Vermont Center of Emerging Technologies (VCET). Throughout the four-week class, Clarner developed a business model, identified his early adopters and contemplat-

ed next steps. Roach-Gerber and Bradbury quickly became mentors for Clarner, as did Terry Kellog, a venture capitalist and father to Carl Kellog '24. Clarner also found other support from the Middlebury community, developing relationships with Heather Lovejoy '08 and Ben Yamron '21 of the Innovation Hub. Currently, the Hub is helping Clarner start fundraise through MiddSTART. Clarner also recently won the Innovation Hub's prestigious MidChallenge grant, which offers \$4,000 to students interested in business, technology, social im-

pact and sustainability, and the arts. Clarner is now able to use this money to grow Equipme. "There are so many resources [at Middlebury] and it's been huge in allowing me to get early stage funding," Clarner said. "\$4,000 makes a massive difference, especially in these early stages." Clarner has also solicited help from his varsity hockey teammates at Middlebury. The hockey team has a robust core of student entrepreneurs, including Adam Wisco '22.5, who runs Bigg-A-Bed; EMack Bentley '22.5 and Bret Pastor '22.5, who run Midd Wash & Carry; and Tyler Little '23, who runs Middle-

bury Campus Storage. Backed with support from many directions, Clarner has recently worked on finalizing his website. He's also filing an LLC and recently hired a social media manager, Aidan Shepardson '24. Clarner will be in Burlington this summer, working at VCET and alongside the inaugural Vermont Innovation Summer cohort. This group includes students working across Burlington's innovation ecosystem, both as interns at start-ups and partner organizations and on their own self-designed projects. The summer months will offer Clarner a golden opportunity to establish Equipme. He plans to hone in on marketing, going door-to-door to ask people with outdoor equipment if they'd be interested in joining the platform. Equipme will be initially targeted at recreational kayaking and paddleboarding on the lakes of the Greater Burlington Area.

Clarner also hopes to execute other marketing events, like running focus groups and making flyers. The MidChallenge grant money, along with the money he raises through his MiddSTART campaign, will help him cover these costs and should also help him cover legal costs and living expenses. Down the line, Clarner is also interested in expanding Equipme to other college campuses. If you ask Clarner what the most rewarding part of starting his own company has been, he'll tell you that it's been the people who have wanted to help him succeed. This leads into Clarner's message for student entrepreneurs: You can never talk with too many people. "Try to soak in as much advice as possible," Clarner said. "At Middlebury, there are so many amazing people who want to help, but they can't lend a hand or give advice if you don't reach out. Professors, friends, whoever it may be, start having conversations regardless of how new or uncertain your idea is." Clarner also encourages other student entrepreneurs to pick something they love. If you aren't passionate about what you're doing, the work will sour. It's clear the Clarner is passionate about outdoor equipment, mentioning that if he can continue working on Equipme after college, he would. "It wouldn't get any better than that," he said.



Jack Clarner '24 is the founder of Equipme.

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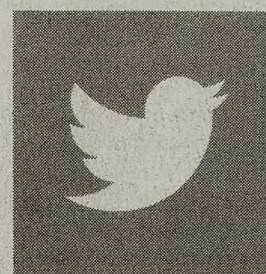
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The Middlebury
Campus‘Full and Equal Participation’:
Reconsidering Middlebury’s financial aid

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

On April 13, fellow NESCAC institution Williams College announced its commitment to move to a fully-grant based financial aid system, effectively eliminating loans and work study packages. This shift is said to benefit the 53% of students who are on financial aid, at a cost of 6.75 million dollars per year.

In her letter to the Williams community, President Maud Mandel stated that the “program is a crucial step in our quest for what we are starting to call ‘true affordability’ — a program that encompasses the costs of both attendance and full and equal participation.”

This language highlights that financial aid packages that require students to take out loans or work up to 20 hours a week on campus do not align with genuine equity and ac-

cessibility for higher education. In essence, components of financial aid packages like Middlebury’s can often further slant the playing field instead of helping to even it.

With this in mind, we ask that Middlebury take a good, hard look at its current financial aid system. We

fully acknowledge that we are a different institution than Williams, with different resources and financial capabilities. However, Middlebury and Williams also have many similarities, and we believe that their ability to tangibly better the lives of their students through this shift can provide a blueprint for our college to take similar steps. After all, as can be seen in the imminent replacements of Proctor and Battell, Middlebury has been able to mobilize financial capital to change elements of campus life they don’t see as sustainable.

Rethinking affordability doesn’t need to begin with a massive overhaul either. Williams has already served as an example by making textbooks, health insurance and summer storage free for students on financial aid.

There is no question that students on financial aid should have the ability to participate in campus life in

the same ways that their peers do. Students who have to spend multiple hours a week working as part of their federal work study allotments have less time and energy to devote to their academic studies, extracurricular activities and social lives. As a result, their ability to lead “engaged, consequential, and creative lives,” as stated in Middlebury’s mission statement, is significantly hindered.

In addition to the burdensome time commitment posed by work study requirements, anxiety surrounding student loans also hampers one’s ability to pursue academic independence and creativity. Students who know they will need to pay off student loans are more likely to align their studies toward a field that will guarantee them job security and a sustainable source of income post-grad.

This pressure is wholly antithetical to Middlebury’s vision of an interdisciplinary, liberal arts education. If only affluent students feel as if they can afford to focus on humanities or the arts, what are the consequences for the classroom community?

In an article about Williams’ new financial aid program, The Washing-

ton Post notes in an anecdote about a recent graduate that “having loans probably would have pushed him to choose the highest-paying career possible [...] rather than pursuing a post-grad fellowship and trying out different jobs.” If Middlebury truly wants us to embrace inquiry and agency in order to practice ethical citizenship after we graduate, concerns about financial feasibility must be mitigated.

At the end of the day, Middlebury students are here to learn — not to deliver mozzarella sticks to their drunk peers at 1 a.m., not to work until midnight at MidExpress and not to swipe in lines of students at the dining hall. We’re all here to take advantage of a rich social and academic environment, and we all deserve the same chances at doing so, without our time being limited by the burdens of work study.

Students on financial aid should not be responsible for laboring in service of their peers in order to afford to exist here. The system as it currently stands only serves to exacerbate pre-existing inequities in our community, and as Williams has demonstrated, this doesn’t need to be the case.

Let’s Show Up in Solidarity with Farmworkers:
May 1 Action with Migrant Justice (go/maydayaction/)

Op-Ed

Andrés Oyaga ’23 & Molly Babbitt ’23 are members of the Middlebury Milk With Dignity collective.

Join us outside the Middlebury Hannaford this Sunday May 1 at 11:30 a.m. alongside farmworkers demanding humane labor standards. For three years, Migrant Justice VT has led a campaign to urge Hannaford to join Milk with Dignity, a worker-driven program that ensures respect for farmworkers’ human rights in their supply chain. If Hannaford joins Milk with Dignity, the farms that source Hannaford store-brand dairy would be required to implement farmworker-created labor standards, such as fair wages, breaks, housing and safety protocols. Hannaford would pay a premium to farms as they transition to new labor standards, ensuring the financial burden does not fall on individual farmers.

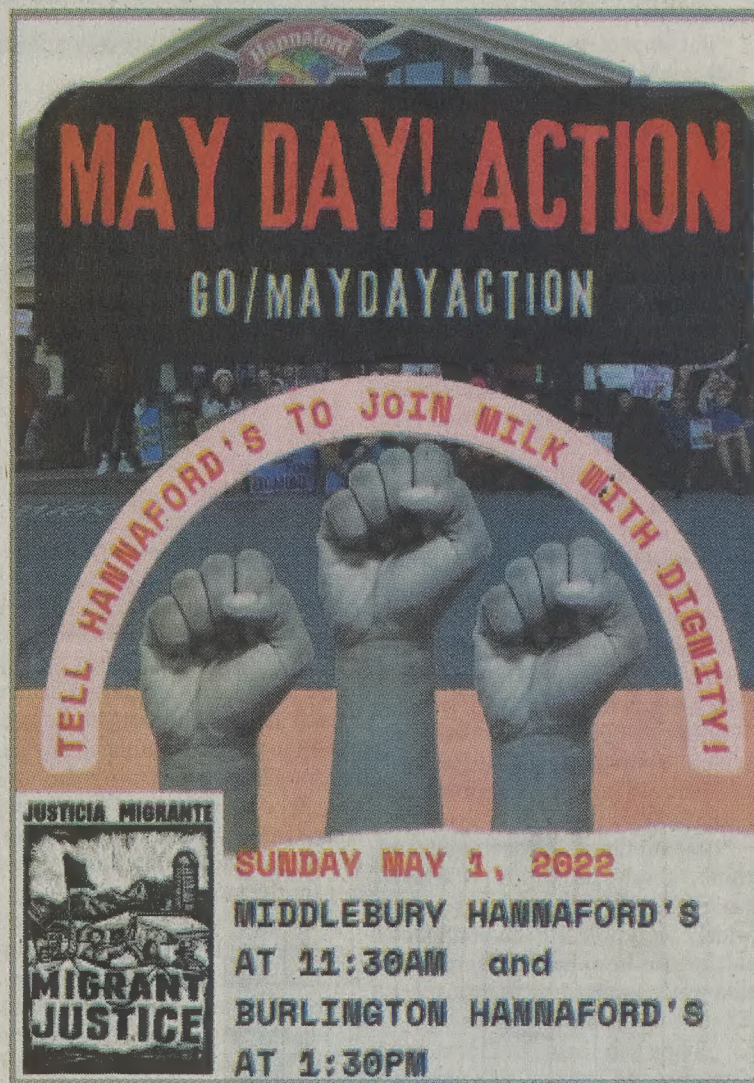
According to Migrant Justice, 40% of farmworkers are paid less than the VT minimum wage; 40% have no days off; 28% routinely work seven hours or more without a break to eat; 20% have their pay illegally withheld; 15% do not have eight consecutive hours off, per day; to sleep; 15% live in overcrowded housing; and 15% have inadequate

heat. The Milk with Dignity Program invites corporations like Hannaford, which are profiting from the dairy industry, to take responsibility for changing these conditions. In 2017, Ben and Jerry’s was the first company to join Milk with Dignity. As a result, 71 farms implemented just labor standards, comprising 20% of Vermont’s entire dairy production. It is time that Hannaford follows Ben and Jerry’s lead.

Hannaford has delayed action for too long. They have the power to change an important aspect of the food system, yet refuse to do so. Their negligence comes at the expense of our neighbors who simply want basic rights in the workplace.

May 1 is May Day, also known as International Workers Day. In a time when workers across the country are addressing labor exploitation from their employers, it is important that we do not lose sight of our commitment to all workers’ rights. Here at Middlebury College, student workers have been advocating for better wages, from ResLife to dining services to MiddView. Staff and professors have also been trying to organize for better wages and working conditions.

To student and non-student workers here at the college and those allied with them: Let’s not forget about the workers that keep Vermont’s dairy industry alive. We’re in this fight for just labor together! Visit go/maydayaction/ for rideshare information on carpooling and how to support. Also fol-



low @migrantjustice and @middmwd on instagram to stay up to date. See

you at the Hannaford in Middlebury at 11:30 a.m. this Sunday, May 1.

Call our Representative, support an
environmental justice bill for Vermont

Op-Ed

Emily Thompson ’23 and Emily Hogan ’24 are members of Sunrise hub at Middlebury, an organization fighting for environmental justice.

Vermont locals currently face a number of problems, from inconveniences to inequitable and unethical abuses. Inaccessible and sparse public transportation leaves many residents stranded and forced to rely on more expensive options to get from point A to point B. Anaerobic digesters, like the one currently on Goodrich Family Farm, continues production amidst a long history of allegations of wage withholding and unethical behaviors against workers. Further human rights abuses remain rigid and severe for migrant workers on dairy farms. Devastating tropical storms such as Irene, which hit Vermont in 2011, have uprooted hundreds of households and have heavily impacted individuals and communities. These problems will only continue to worsen should no actions be taken and no support be given to policies that address these ongoing and severe crises.

Vermont’s Environmental Justice Bill S.B. 148, originally introduced by State Senator Kesha Ram

Hinsdale 10 years ago, aims to confront these inequities and progress Vermont towards environmental justice in all forms. Seventeen states have already adopted various forms of an environmental justice act, aiming to include marginalized communities in the policy-making process. Recent negotiations to pass S.B. 148 builds on these same values and uses environmental justice frameworks and principles to ensure environmental burdens on disproportionately affected communities are always assessed in the legislative process.

Furthermore, the bill dictates that each agency in Vermont create their own community engagement plan in order to better ensure transparency and inclusion in the policymaking process. To help implement these principles, the bill involves the creation of an Advisory Council on Environmental Justice and the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee. Both will serve to advise agencies and departments on their actions regarding environmental investments and provide policy recommendations.

Additionally, an aspect of this bill with huge potential for impact involves its commitment to allocating 55% of federal investments related to climate, natural disasters, the environment and other areas to further protect frontline communities. This commitment could help communities lessen the effects of increasingly severe natural disasters as well as overwhelming air pollution and other environmental problems.

Imagine what Vermont life could

look like for locals with the passage of the EJ bill. People could wake up every day in cozy and affordable homes protected from the harsh Vermont winters because the state government funded a weatherization program that paid people livable wages with benefits to retrofit their homes. Migrant farm workers could wake up warm and comfortable in the living conditions that they deserve. When people travel to work or school, they would only need to hop on accessible, affordable and reliable public transportation powered by renewable energy. When they arrive at work, people would have meaningful jobs: working to decentralize and decarbonize our energy systems, caring for our young, sick, injured, and elderly, educating people to foster their curiosities, growing nourishing food to fuel our work and play... and throughout all of it, there would be a reduced risk of future disasters like Tropical Storm Irene that devastated rural Vermont working class communities. People could sleep easier, knowing Vermont infrastructure protects them from floodwaters and that with all of the EJ bills passed around the country, the U.S.’s emissions are declining, providing that livable future that we deserve.

While Middlebury is sheltered from a lot of the environmental justice issues facing Vermonters, we, as college students, still have much to gain from the EJ bill. With the passage of the bill, we could have representation in policymaking processes that can give working students and staff a living wage for

their labors. Migrant farmworkers would be further empowered in the state legislature, ensuring better labor standards for those who work on the farms that collaborate with Middlebury. Students could travel around the state on affordable public transportation, thereby becoming more connected to our temporary home. Students, faculty, and staff could also reconnect with our food systems, learning about the land the Abenaki have cultivated and finding ways to return the land and thus food sovereignty to its people. Finally, the Middlebury community has roots all over the world. The passage of S.B. 148 could get us on track to reduce Vermont’s carbon emissions, supporting our international community as we fight the climate crisis.

The bill has passed through the State Senate almost unanimously. With the end of the 2022 legislative session looming, the bill needs to pass through the house and land on Governor Phil Scott’s desk. At this current moment, the bill just passed through the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife — led by Addison County’s own Amy Sheldon — and has widespread support. Thirty-five environmental and social organizations have signed a letter of support for the passage of the bill, demonstrating the intersectionality of the bill and the level of commitment constituents feel for ensuring the bill’s passage. It is clear — Vermont is past ready for the passage of an Environmental Justice bill, and Sunrise Middlebury stands fully in support of its implementation.

TEDxMiddlebury finds growth in failure



The event was emceed by three TEDx board members, Kian Lalji '23, Jaab Veskijkul '22.5 and Liv Cohen '23.

COURTESY PHOTO

By ELIZA KING FREEDMAN
Arts & Culture Editor

“Maybe failure is worth dwelling on,” two TEDxMiddlebury organizers Kian Lalji '23 and Liv Cohen '23 told a full Dana Auditorium. On April 22, TEDxMiddlebury hosted Failing Forward, an event encouraging Middlebury speakers to share stories of failure, and how they grew from these trying moments. TEDx events are community-driven and mirror traditional TEDTalks — except that they showcase members of the local community.

Due to Covid-19-related restrictions last year, all speakers came from within the Middlebury College community. Though board members had the option to open the event up to outside speakers this year, they decided to make it a tradition and use the night to share stories from within Middlebury.

Before the talks began, emcees Cohen and Lalji presented a brief slideshow on the theme of the night. They began with a photo of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, a landmark that only gained popularity once it “failed” and began to lean. Next was a photo of Madonna, who was fired from Dunkin’ before she decided to try out music and gift us all with Middlebury-favorite “Like a Prayer.” The slideshow concluded with a photo of Lalji himself, a Dartmouth reject (aren’t we all?) who is grateful to have ended up at Middlebury instead.

The first speaker of the night was Professor of Psychology Matthew Kimble. He discussed the psychology of failing, how people prepare for failure and if they are ready for it. In his current research, he has found that an individual’s capacity to bounce back from adversity has far more to do with the community in which that individual lives — and the support that they have — than any specific characteristic of that person. “It’s not a question of whether or not those individuals can

learn how to fail. It’s whether or not we, as a community, can learn how to love,” concluded Kimble.

Next up was Brian Conde-Martinez '25, who discussed how people can use failure to become the best versions of themselves. He reflected on receiving a failing grade on a high school midterm, and his tendency to run from failure. He shared that failure actually generates cortisol in the brain, causing people to question themselves when plans fall apart.

“It all comes down to confidence. We have to take leaps of chance and be okay with failure... We have to realize that we don’t have all the power in every situation, and let ourselves take control instead of letting failure take control,” Conde-Martinez said.

Amanda Martins '25 then took the stage to discuss the stigma around failure. She framed her talk around how she struggled with the idea of “failing forward,” as she reflected on how people continually repeat mistakes instead of moving forward. Her alternative notion was to think of failure as a spiral, in the sense that though people fail the same way again, they are still making progress.

“By failing outward, you can intersect your spiral with people who are doing the same thing, and you can grow and connect together in a beautiful way,” Martins said.

Jennifer Stratman, whom many may know from the Grille or the beloved Middlebury food truck, but who also once taught at famed culinary school Le Cordon Bleu in Austin, focused her talk on how her food truck business in Austin influenced who she is today. She took the audience through a series of trials that she went through as her business was getting off the ground. When she bought her first truck, it needed a completely new engine, and she had to jump through hoops to certify her truck to sell food and to find consistent openings where she could park it during the weeks. “I was surviving on sugar free Red Bull, and I was drunk on creative fulfillment,” Stratman said. Her talk concluded with the heartwarming story of how she moved with her husband to Middlebury, learning to take things in stride.



COURTESY OF JORDAN SAINT-LOUIS

Each of TEDxMiddlebury’s speakers were members of the community this year.

The final speaker of the night was Afra Fairouz '25, a first year from Bangladesh whose personal experiences with female reproduction education encouraged her to start an NGO in her native country to fight the stigma surrounding menstruation. In many parts of the world, Bangladesh included, women are excluded from religious events while they are menstruating. Fairouz and three of her friends founded Put a Period, an organization

with the goal of educating girls in Bangladesh about the menstrual cycle and how to take care of their bodies in an environment where many girls aren’t allowed to seek guidance from gynecologists. For their first project, they did a survey finding that a staggeringly high percentage of girls in Bangladesh didn’t even know why they had their period or what it even meant.

The talks given last Friday were inspiring, and it was special to hear

such personal stories from people in the community. It is a rare opportunity to sit down for an evening and listen to people share their passions and vulnerabilities; and that is the intention of the TedX program: to create unique gatherings that inspire and inform.

Editor’s note: For more information on the speakers, visit sites.middlebury.edu/tedx/



COURTESY OF JORDAN SAINT-LOUIS

Kian Lalji (left) and Liv Cohen (right) introduced the speakers before the talks begin.



COURTESY OF JORDAN SAINT-LOUIS

Jennifer Stratman, Head of Concessions and Food Truck Program, spoke of the roadbumps involved in starting her foodtruck business.

“Ophelia Underwater” rewrites a Shakespearean classic

By **SOPHIE BUTLER-RAHMAN**
Contributing Writer

The play starts with a white trip-tych-style wall. On the floor is everything one would expect to see in a typical teenager's room: clothes scattered all around, a nightstand filled with books and mismatched comfy seats. The minute the lights come down, a projector whirrs, showing a video across the white walls of a girl drowning.

This past weekend, “Ophelia Underwater,” a play by Janielle Kastner, had its run in the Hepburn Zoo theater. It was the joint acting-costume design thesis for Bella Constantino-Carrigan '22 who starred as the titular character, Ophelia, and the intermediate work in directing for Meili Huang '23. Though it was a one-woman show, the production utilized both audio and video clips, and featured a company consisting of Victoria Keith '23 (Nanny), Ash Walsh '24 (Brother), Jacob Raymond '23 (Dad) and Trey Atkins '22.5 (H).

The play is an adaptation of

one of Shakespeare's best known works, “Hamlet,” and is centered around his love interest, Ophelia. The original play's premise centers around the inheritance of the newly vacant throne, as Hamlet and his uncle Claudius jockey for power. Ophelia is the daughter of the family's royal advisor, and falls deeply in love with Hamlet. Hamlet then attempts to kill Claudius in order to obtain the throne, and kills Polonius, Ophelia's father, by accident. Once Ophelia finds out that her love has just killed her father, she drowns herself out of sadness.

The show begins with a video of Ophelia drowning in water. It is followed by Ophelia entering the stage and viewing a countdown of the amount of time that she has left to live. Set in her dying moments, Ophelia uses the last minutes of her life to share her story.

Set in the present day, Ophelia wears a plaid skater skirt, Converse High Tops sneakers and a tie-front cardigan-style top, instead of the traditional Shakespearean garb. She deals with modern-day issues like which dress she should wear to homecoming, as well as how to navigate long-distance relationships through modern technology.

A main element of the show were the hand-drawn tally counts on both sides of the stage reading “comedy” and “tragedy.” When Ophelia was explaining funny and very realistic aspects of a long distance relationship like internet connectivity issues, a tally under “comedy” would appear. A tally under “tragedy” appeared in the moments of difficulty and struggle in her relationship with H, like when she attempts to be sexy for him via video chat and becomes uncomfortable. These tallies mark iconic aspects of Shakespearean theater, and seeing these moments counted throughout the performance created an opportunity to critique Shakespeare's formulaic structure. To anyone who saw this without any prior knowledge of Shakespeare, Ophelia appears to be a normal high school girl who is navigating adolescence. The audience watches her navigate these very mature emotions at the age of 16 because she is dating H, who is older, and she feels the need to speed up her adolescence in order to navigate this relationship.

The entire show is an immersive multimedia experience. With the use of Covergirl and Pantene-inspired commercials, as well

as screenshots from web searches, the audience is transported into the mind of Ophelia.

Constantino-Carrigan's portrayal of Ophelia was deeply moving. Her impersonation of a young, in-love and naive girl transforms the play's innocent glow into a cloud of darkness and frustration all in the course of 90 minutes. Audiences observe her examining her story the way Shakespeare wrote her, viewing it with a critical lens, and at the end grabbing a physical copy and crossing out lines as she finds the power within her. This was definitely a stand out moment in the show, as it delineated the idea of modernization. It's a show that has many relatable elements to it, but it also plays with and critiques the unwritten (and written) rules of classical theatre.

Selecting a 700 project in the theatre department is a personal and anticipated moment in one's time as a theatre major at Middlebury. Every year prior is spent viewing other student's theses and absorbing inspiration for their future production. It is the true culmination of each student's work in their focuses (acting, directing, design, history, playwriting or literature) into one show that defines

their legacy and how they are remembered within the department.

In talking about the selection process with Constantino-Carrigan, she explained that it began with her prior love for Shakespearean theatre and curiosity about the character of Ophelia.

“Ophelia Underwater” being a one-woman show really allowed me to focus on the specifics of one character when it came to design, and I hoped it would also force the audience to watch Ophelia with the same nuance and intensity that I believe she deserved” Constantino-Carrigan said.

This message so strongly echoed to audiences throughout the course of the show. In honing in on one misunderstood character, it was evident how important the message of reclaiming history was. This theme was also echoed in last week's “Botticelli in the Fire,” as representation and empowerment in theatre are mechanisms that are crucial in advancing it. The back-to-back showings of these two theses exemplify a larger movement within the theater toward highlighting representation and empowerment through the reclamation of histories.

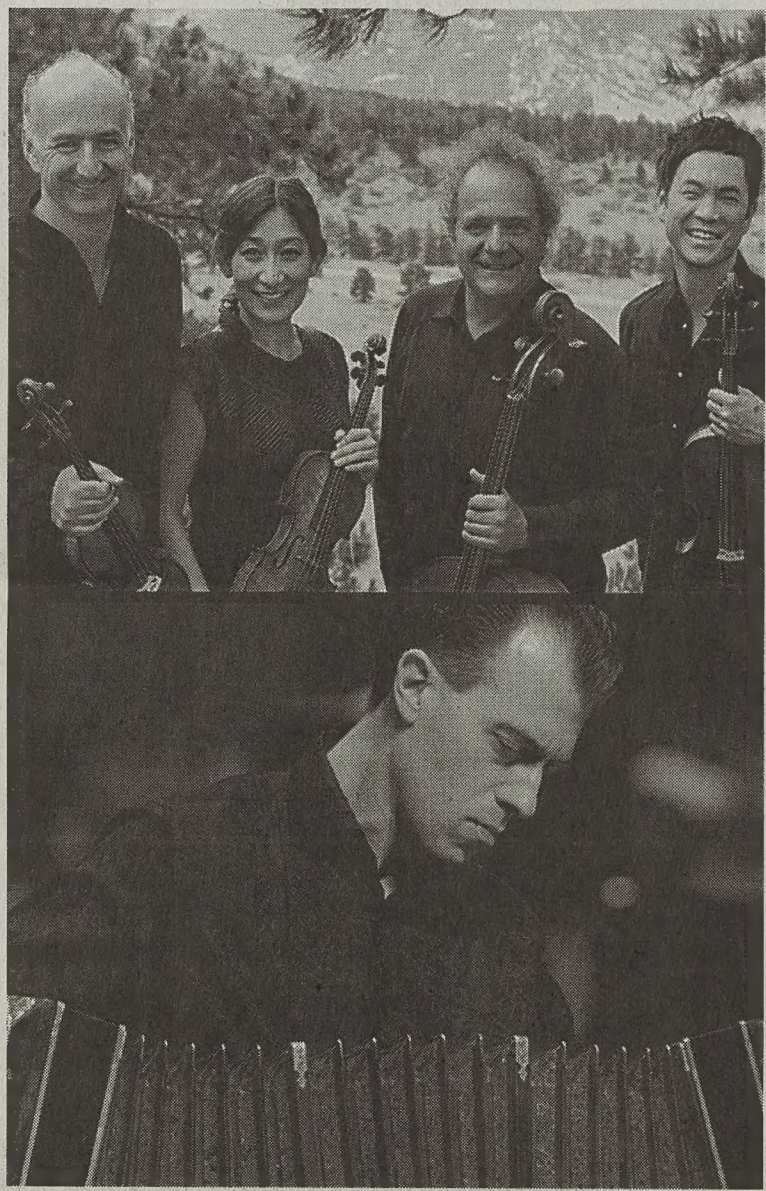
Takács Quartet entertains with a genre-bending performance

By **TEJAS SRINIVASAN**
Opinions Editor

The Takács Quartet first played Middlebury's Performing Arts Series in 1994. This would prove to be the start of a 28-year partnership, with the quartet returning for 27 subsequent performances at Robison Hall. However, the quartet's April 22 performance, featuring a genre-bending ensemble with bandoneón and accordina virtuoso Julien Labro, was by far the most daring program presented.

The group's intentions for the concert were made quite clear from the first piece, “Circles” by Bryce Dessner. “I have left quite a lot of information out of the score, to encourage the players of the quartet and Julien to find their own expressions and dynamics,” Dessner wrote in the show's program. The musicians intricately wove together their blending parts to create a seamless tapestry of sound. “Circles” showcased not only the skill of these eminent musicians, but also the musical potential of this ensemble. They certainly utilized this eclectic combination effectively, spending the next 90 minutes creating atmospheric sound worlds that transported the audience from Argentina to Germany with a few stops in between.

Labro's own “Meditation #1” seemed to take influence from a variety of cultures. It started out with open, airy harmonies that brought out the softest timbres of the strings and the bandoneón. The Takács would later put these timbres on display with their interpretation of the



COURTESY PHOTO

Ravel. During a solo in the middle of the piece, Labro teased out elements of the Argentine Tango, the most

popular genre of the bandoneón, and relished in the dance rhythms. While he seemed most comfortable

performing this genre, Labro's fascinating writing quickly returned to a liminal space between genres. The constantly modulating, almost Wagnerian, harmonies made listeners question whether this piece would end in a positive place. And indeed it did, at the very end, as Labro and violist Richard O'Neill shared a smile.

The lighting dimmed and spotlights shone center stage as the members of the quartet moved to their “courtside seats” on the edges of the stage to watch Labro showcase the versatility of the bandoneón. He told the tale of a brothel in Buenos Aires with Dino Saluzzi's “Minguito.” Labro drummed the tango rhythms with his hand on the wood of his instrument and allowed the audience to acclimate to the dance-like pulse before starting his poetic rendition of this piece.

Labro then transported the audience to a German cathedral in his arrangement of a Bach cantata. The powerful echo of the bandoneón in Robison Hall sounded like an organ. Although nothing can ever match Bach's choral writing in this cantata, programming this piece demonstrated the bandoneón's original purpose as the organ's budget replacement in German churches.

In Labro's “Astoración,” he intelligently crafted an electronic loop consisting of moments from an interview with his hero Astor Piazzolla. Labro played the bandoneón live between the recordings, so the track, with its echoes and repeated loops, resembled a Kanye sample. While this piece is his celebration of the instrument and its history, it was also a display of his command over both the bandoneón and the accordina. With stealthy switches between the two instruments, and the inclusion of jazzy runs throughout, “Astoración” is the complete audio portrait of Ju-

lien Labro.

After Labro's excellence brought them to their feet, the Takács returned to the center to play one of the cornerstones of string quartet repertoire: Maurice Ravel's “String Quartet in F Major.” The quartet took a nontraditional route, emphasizing the delicacy of the piece and the airiness of the harmonies that “Meditation #1” evoked earlier in the program. Cues from first violinist Edward Dusing were soft and pointed, and the rest of the ensemble followed his lead in creating an ethereal atmosphere. The second movement provided a perfect contrast with pizzicato sections faster and more decadent than most recordings of the piece. The energy in the room was palpable, but as they moved on to the third and fourth movements, the quartet made sure their artistic vision wasn't forgotten. Their “less is more” philosophy pervaded throughout the rest of the piece, most notably in their use of dynamics. The climaxes seldom reached a fortissimo level. Extended breaks between each movement also created the effect of a fragmented piece of music. The quartet strived to tell not one, but four different stories in the Ravel. It was astonishingly effective.

Clarice Assad's “Clash” was the amalgamation of all the techniques and sounds we'd heard throughout the rest of the concert. It proved to be the antithesis to “Circle” as the parts rarely fit together. However, the five musicians seemed to find comfort in this idea and lavishly milked the dissonances right until the very last chord. “Clash,” coupled with the romantic encore of Hector Villa-Lobos’ “Melodia Sentimental,” celebrated the wonderful relationship that the Takács Quartet has with Middlebury College, and hopefully inaugurated a new one with Julien Labro.

The best spring study spots on campus

By **SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI**
Contributing Writer

It's finally time to put away your skis, coats and winter hats, and take out your sandals, sundresses and sunglasses. At long last, the never-ending Vermont winter is over, and spring has sprung! The days of bitter-cold walks to the dining hall are through, now replaced by leisurely strolls to class, town and clubs.

With wide lawns, plenty of outdoor seating and impressive views, the college's campus is the perfect place to enjoy the beauty of spring. While the season is gorgeous, it unfortunately aligns with one of the busiest and most stressful times of the academic year for Middlebury students. With wrapping up end-of-semester projects, finals just around the corner and what often feels like a never-ending chasm of work, it can be difficult to enjoy the newfound warmth, flowers and green all around.

Luckily for students, there are a myriad of different ways to simultaneously enjoy the outdoors and complete schoolwork. The

college has made it relatively easy for students to be able to accomplish both with a wealth of outdoor seating options. The picnic tables enjoyed by students during the fall have reappeared outside dining halls and McCullough Student Center, and Adirondack chairs are scattered throughout the McCullough lawn, Battell Beach and near Atwater dining. These are perfect places to study or complete class readings while enjoying the sun and warmer weather.

“I like the Adirondack chairs around the main quad because they're so convenient,” said Mei Dwyer '24. “It's more spontaneous than a ritual, if I see there's a chair then I'll take it and soak up the sun if possible.”

One can also find outdoor seating around Mahaney Arts Center, making use of the spacious back patio. Students get creative too, turning the steps of buildings, such as The Chapel, and nooks around buildings, like Bicentennial Hall, into workspaces.

“The view from the Davis [library] second floor balcony is great as it overlooks the rest of the campus, and it's a nice place to unwind and do some light readings for my politics class,” Michael Eller '24 said.

While not all assignments can be completed outdoors, and computer glare can pose a real challenge to outdoor productivity, simple adjustments such as printing readings or handwriting problem sets can be well worth it to get a little extra time to soak up the sunshine. It can make completing work during this hectic time feel a little less stressful and may make time spent working go by faster. Eating meals outdoors is another way to fit in time to enjoy the sunshine.

“During Covid, my friends and I would study on picnic blankets outside of Starr. Because some classes were outside, the Wi-Fi from Axinn was boosted and reached just far enough to accommodate such a luxury,” Owen Mason-Hill '22 said.

Though the college is surrounded by beautiful mountains that are begging students to hike them, this can be a time-consuming activity during such a busy time of year. The time it takes to complete a full hike may feel like too time consuming an activity depending on workload and required transportation time. With mountains within driving distance, transportation can also be difficult to find, inconvenient and a stressor. Luckily for stu-

dents, the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) surrounding campus offers a more efficient substitute for a long day-hike. These trails serve as a nice escape from the main campus, without ever having to leave. Within walking distance of the main parts of campus, it's easy to sneak a moment away from the fast-paced hustle of campus. The trails are tucked into the woods, and campus life feels far away as you become surrounded by nature. The tall pines shield you from buildings, making stress and work feel miles away. On the trails, the mountain view, beautiful wildflowers and animals provide a peaceful escape from the usual bustle of life.

If you can't stop sneezing and spring allergies have you down, it's also possible to get in touch with nature as the weather warms without ever leaving your dorm room. Many Middlebury students enjoy the company of potted plants in living spaces. There are many student organizations and events that sometimes offer students the opportunity to participate in activities such as potting plants for their dorm rooms. One club, Creating Art Together, celebrated Earth Day by potting herbs in self-decorated plant pots. Be on the lookout for plant-related cam-

pus activities such as this.

Another great way to get outdoors during the final weeks of the semester is to take a trip to Middlebury's very own vegetable garden, the Knoll. The garden can be found along the TAM, off of Route 125. With a gazebo and Adirondack chairs, this is another possible springtime study-spot — though reliable internet may be hard to come by. It's also another nice scenic break for students walking or running the TAM. Students can also attend what the college calls “Knoll Hours” at the Knoll, the college's organic farm, allowing students to flex their green thumbs. Volunteer hours are offered Sunday through Friday and can be found at go/knoll-hours.

Middlebury's campus is full of nature; around just about every corner is an opportunity to enjoy the spring weather. Keep a lookout, and don't be surprised if these unique Middlebury moments turn you into an avid outdoors-person.

Arts & Culture Editor Olivia Mueller '24 contributed reporting.

Editor's Note: Owen Mason-Hill '22 is the Senior Arts & Culture Editor for The Campus.

On Tap taps into energy of popular throwbacks in spring show

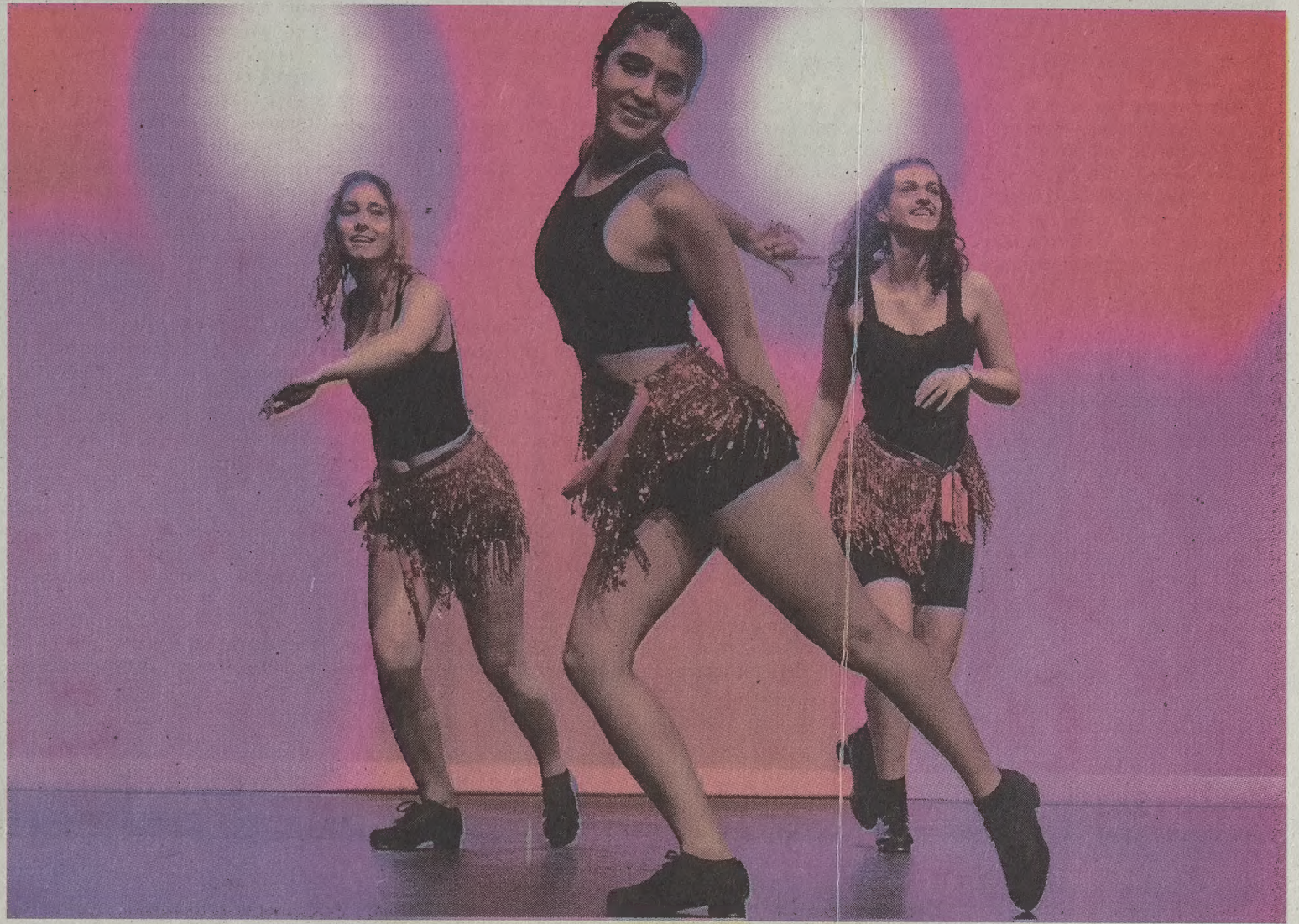
By OLIVIA MUELLER
Arts & Culture Editor

Right from the get-go, On Tap's Friday night performance brought energy to Wilson Hall with an opening number set to Elvis's "Hound Dog" that featured the full company. With bright smiles and matching red scarves, the group of 14 looked upbeat, cohesive and confident. However, while the group used crisp arm movements and tap steps that felt classic, they also proved that tap can and will evolve with the times.

The "decades" theme for the show has been a favorite of the dancers in the senior class. "It seemed right to do it for this spring for their final show," On Tap Co-President Ali DePaolo '23 explained in an email to The Campus. All of the dances in the show were choreographed by students, and as the music moved from the 1950s to the present, a variety of modern-feeling dance moves were added alongside tap classics in a way that felt seamless, fresh and, most importantly, fun.

Even in more traditional tap numbers like "Shim Sham," there were elements of surprise. A blackout in the middle of the song gave way to a more fast-paced second half of dancing.

Alongside choreography, lighting was also used to great effect to enhance the performance. In "I'm Still Standing," there were dazzling transitions between different colors of lights. Alongside a shift in the choreography from a straight line of dancers to a rotating circle, the dancers continued to build energy and excite the audience while staying perfectly on beat. Three staggered waves of dancers executing choreography and arm movements created a cascade effect that was visually pleasing and also used to great effect in choreography for



several other dances.

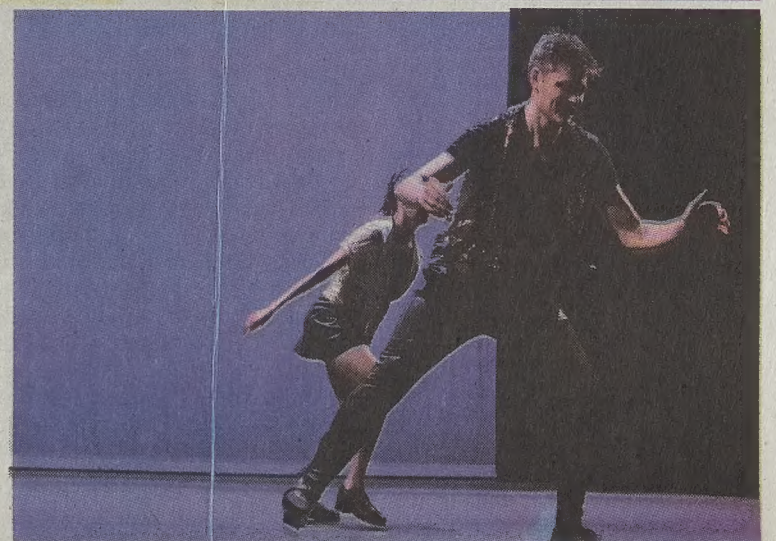
As the music got more modern, the choreography became increasingly creative and less stereotypically "tap." A tap dance to Destiny's Child's "Bills, Bills, Bills"? It might not seem like the most obvious choice — but yep, it happened. The dance featured some hip-hop elements in keeping with the '90s decade, including a full-body swerve and roll in between tap steps that had the audience cheering wildly. "It's fun to see how everyone incorporates their individual personalities and dance styles

into their choreographed pieces," Rasika Iyer '23 said.

Applause and reactions to each dance got louder with each song as more and more audience members recognized the music as it became more modern. Audience members sang along to classic pop songs like "Toxic," and waved glow sticks during blackouts between numbers where transition music played.

The tap workshop midway through the show — a beloved On Tap tradition — was high energy and got the audience up on their feet and laughing. Dancers gave a quick tutorial on how to do a "wing," an iconic tap move that involves a dizzying combination of brushes, spansks and taps on both legs at once, with a sweeping arm as well. As the audience attempted the move, it added a new appreciation for the performance. Dancers made the choreography look effortless, but tapping is a lot harder than it looks. While the audience may hear a cohesive rhythm, until trying it themselves, they might not realize how many subtle differences there are between each movement — taps, flaps, spansks and more, all in incredibly rapid succession.

"Fergalicious," one of the largest non-company numbers in the show with eight dancers, got the audience cheering loudly. All of the dancers wore matching red



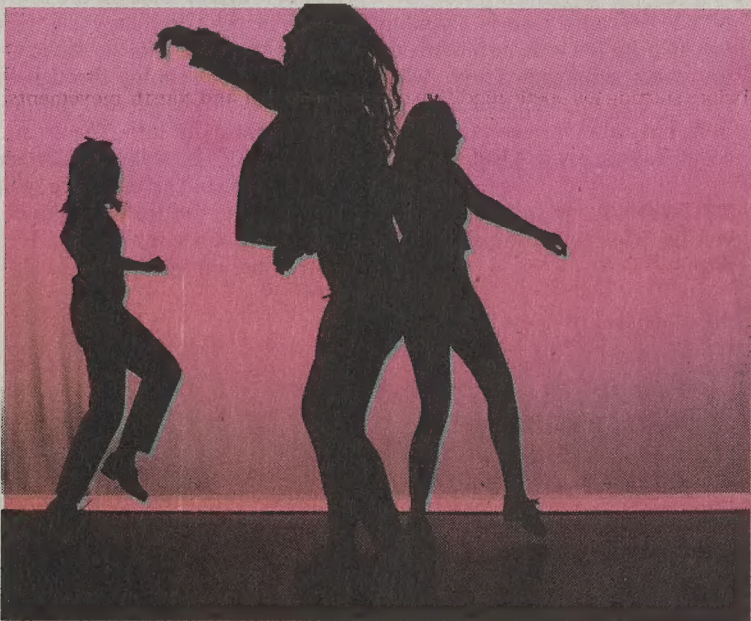
skirts which caught the light with each step.

One of the other highlights of the show outside of the stellar company numbers was a duet by co-presidents Matt Fliegauf '22 and DePaolo to "Nothing from Nothing." Both dancers maintained a stellar stage presence. Their smiles felt genuine and relaxed as they busted out incredibly intricate, fast-paced footwork. During brief solo moments each had, it felt as if the other dancer was cheering them on and supporting them onstage.

As the oldest student-run dance troupe on campus, On Tap is a well-oiled machine, but every semester, the group also still man-

ages to bring something different and new to each performance. Bringing tap through the decades with such joy energized the audience and made tap dance feel fresh and relevant.

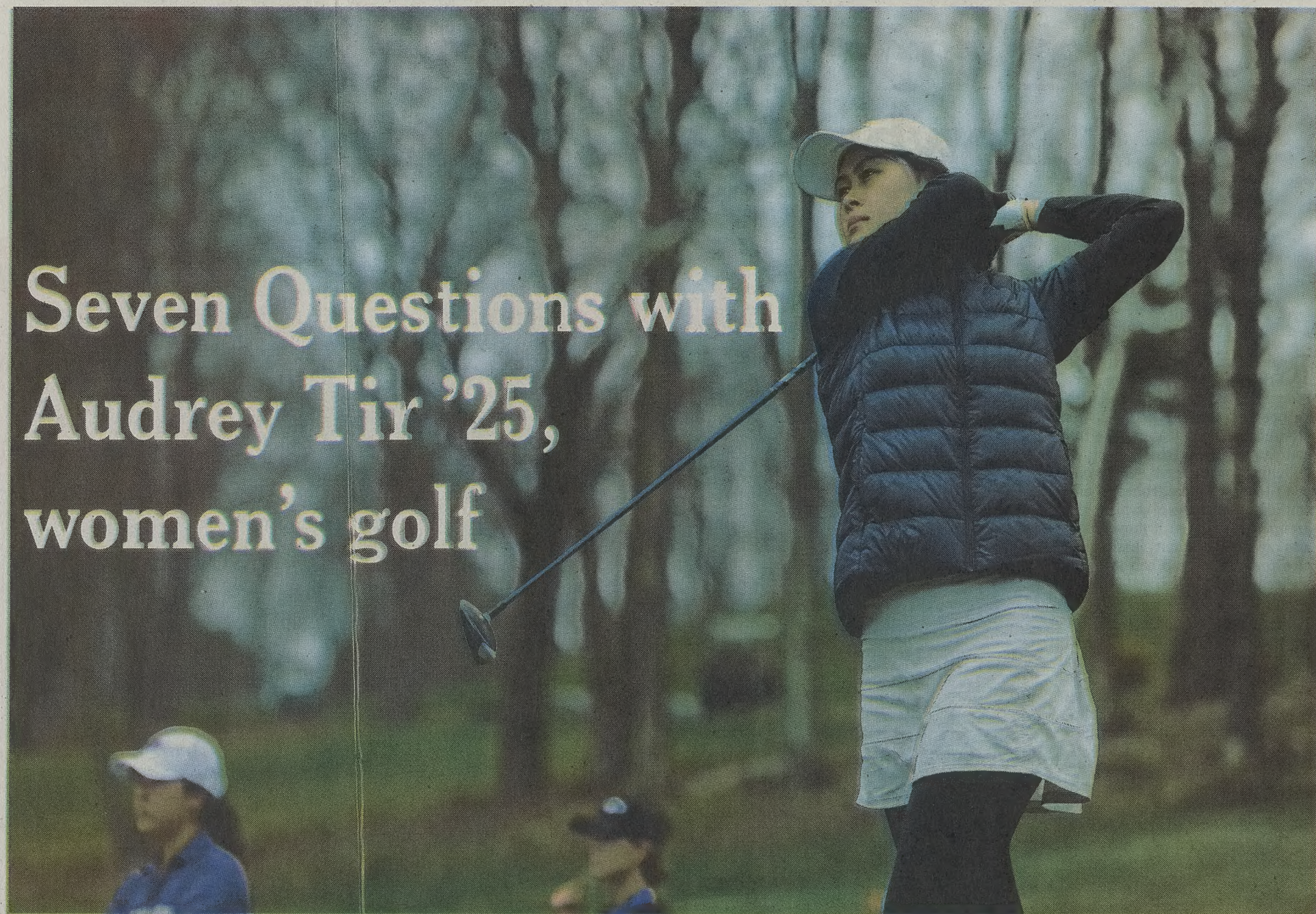
"One of my favorite things about On Tap is that we all come from a variety of dance backgrounds," Iyer said. "Some members are avid dancers involved in other dance groups on campus, some members learned tap from being involved in musical theatre, and some members haven't tapped since elementary school but have been able to rekindle their love for tap dancing by joining On Tap."



EMMANUEL TAMRAT/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

On Tap's "Decades" performance featured an entertaining mix of music, ranging from 1950s classics like Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" to more modern hits like Brittany Spears' "Toxic."

Seven Questions with Audrey Tir '25, women's golf



COURTESY OF MIDDLEBURY ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS

Audrey Tir '25 has made an instant impact for women's golf in her rookie season.

By **BLAISE SIEFER**
Senior Sports Editor

Audrey Tir '25, from Wilmette, Ill., is a first-year on women's golf. In the NESCAC Qualifier last October, Tir recorded an 18-hole score of -1, 70 — becoming the first golfer in program history to complete an under-par round. In this installment of "Seven Questions," Tir discusses her earliest memories with golf, why she chose Middlebury and the best hole on the Ralph Myhre course.

Blaise Siefer: What are your earliest memories of playing golf?

Audrey Tir: I started playing golf

at nine years old. My older sister had experienced three concussions playing sports, so my mom didn't let any of us play contact sports after that. I remember my first time on the golf course, my dad left me alone in the golf cart. I thought it was a good idea to drive the cart to him after he hit his shot. As a nine-year-old, I couldn't reach the pedals so I bent over to push them with my hands, which didn't allow me to steer or see over the wheel. I almost drove into one of the ponds on the golf course. My parents laugh about it now, but boy were they angry in the moment.

BS: Why did you decide to attend Middlebury?

AT: Middlebury's location and teaching style just seemed like a good fit. I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do in terms of academics, so a liberal arts college was the direction I went when looking at col-

leges my junior year of high school. I liked the fact that the campus was a little smaller and felt more personal than the other bigger schools that I looked at. The campus is absolutely gorgeous as well.

BS: What are you studying here and why does it interest you?

AT: I am currently thinking of majoring in economics and with a minor in political science. I'm thinking of attending law school but not sure just yet, so those fields seem very applicable to both the modern world if I decide to immediately join the workforce after undergrad or if I want to apply for graduate school.

BS: What's your favorite memory on the golf team at Middlebury?

AT: My favorite memory is definitely during the NESCAC Qualifier in the fall season. I just love the

competitive atmosphere and also getting to travel with my teammates. Other than the tournaments, I would say getting to play on the Ralph [Myhre course] with my teammates is always something I look forward to. With my short time on the team, I don't have as many memories as the upperclassmen do. I'm very excited for next season to continue making great memories!

BS: Do you have a favorite club?

AT: My favorite club is definitely my six iron. It's reliable and makes the most satisfying sound when I make contact with the ball. My irons have always been my favorite set of clubs in my golf bag.

BS: What is one golf-related goal you have for your time at Middlebury?

AT: One goal in terms of golf is to,

by the end of my stay at Middlebury, feel like I have contributed to the best of my ability towards the team. I want to be able to leave feeling proud of myself for what I have worked hard for, personally and as a member on the team. More broadly, I also want to continue making valuable friendships inside and outside the team through golf.

BS: What is the best hole on Ralph Myhre and why?

AT: My favorite hole on the course has to be the 11th hole. It's a tricky hole if your tee shot goes awry — there's water running through the fairway and trees left and right you don't want to hit into. The green is elevated and guarded by bunkers as well. This hole can either be really tough because of the obstacles or a birdie hole since it's a par-5. Honestly, a par on this hole feels like a birdie.



CAROLINE HARDING

PFL Weekly Ep. 9:

Women's track & field wins meet, men's baseball undefeated at home, women's lacrosse charges past Colby

By **BLAISE SIEFER, ELI DIBARI, MARCO FENGLER, CAPTAIN RUDOLPH & CAROLINE HARDING**

The school records keep coming! Baseball and softball both shattered program home run records this past weekend, recording dominant victories in the process. In this jam-packed episode, the PFL Weekly crew also high-

lights the men's golf team, who finished second at the Williams Invitational; women's tennis, currently 7-1 in NESCAC play; and track & field, who are preparing for the NESCAC Championship meet this coming weekend. Captain also convinces Marco to make another "Marco guarantee"!

You can find the ninth episode of PFL Weekly on Spotify.

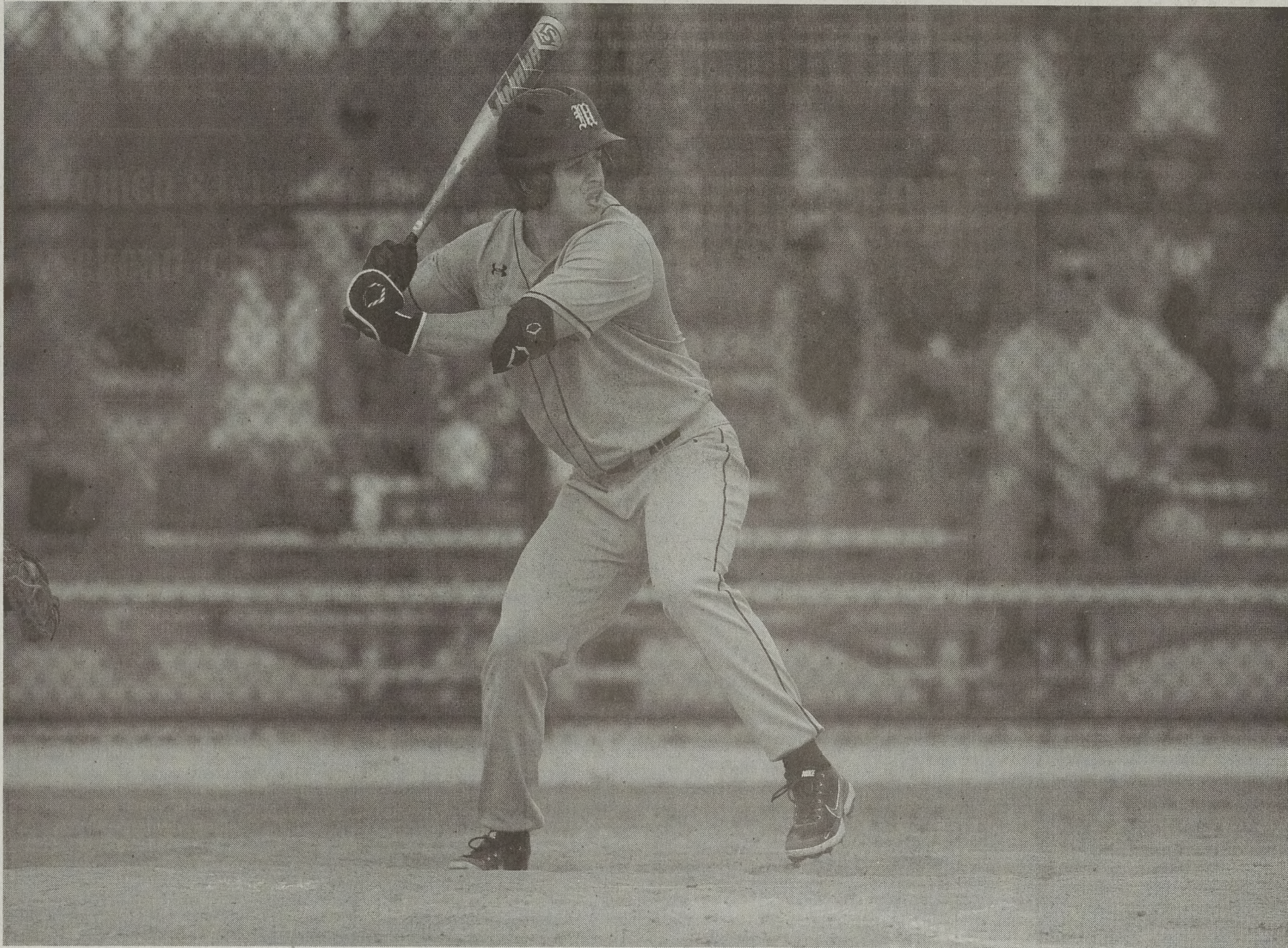
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ALEC RITCH '23 HELPS BASEBALL TO 11-GAME WIN STREAK, A PROGRAM RECORD



Alec Ritch '23 is a key player on the baseball team this season, both on the mound and at the plate.

COURTESY OF MIDDLEBURY ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS

By RYAN HEINZERLING
Contributing Writer

If Alec Ritch '23 could pick a signature moment from this season, it would be Middlebury's doubleheader sweep of Williams on Sunday, April 17. Not only did the wins help Middlebury to their record-setting win streak, but the victories were also fueled by Ritch's heroics.

"Alec is the first player I have coached that had a true steal of home during our game versus Williams," Head Coach Mike Leonard told The Campus. "It was a huge moment in that game and something I'll always remember. [The moment is] so representative of him as a baseball player — he is

such a gifted athlete and base runner."

Ritch's dominance on both sides of the ball — he is both a pitcher and a star hitter — are fueling Middlebury's (18–8) push toward a NESCAC championship. Ritch leads the team in hits (32), ranks second in OPS (1.235) and has 20 walks, more than double the next best on the team (Zip Malley '23; 10).

Ritch is also giving the Panthers quality innings on the mound. He has pitched the third most innings (29.1) and has recorded the fourth most strikeouts (25) on the team, and has only issued eight walks.

He laughed when I called him Middlebury's Shohei Ohtani, last year's Major League Baseball American League MVP who's the first player since Babe Ruth to hit and pitch successfully in the Majors, showing just how difficult it is to succeed on both sides of the plate.

When asked about his success, Ritch is quick to credit his teammates.

"This team is really unique in the sense that our focus comes from having fun and being loose," Ritch said. "This is one of those teams where you don't have to

"We haven't won [the NESCAC] since 2006 ... so I think that is the goal, and the only goal."

motivate everybody. We all have the same goal in mind, and that's winning ... everybody wants to get better and looks around and sees other people working hard — that motivates them."

Ritch also credits Driveline

Baseball, a Washington-based company that offers a blend of high-level coaching and detailed analytics to players. Last spring, Ritch and several Middlebury teammates, including John Collins '23, trained with Driveline.

"Obviously, our coaching staff really prioritizes development, so guys aren't afraid to try new things," Ritch said. "Once Coach Leonard came here and rejuvenated the program, we went to the NESCAC Finals in 2017 and again my freshman year, and we lost both times in the Championship. The next step is to get over that hump."

Middlebury's recent win streak was snapped at 11 by Amherst on Saturday, April 23. But Middlebury still sits atop the NESCAC West division with a league-best 6–2 record against conference opponents.

So for Ritch, there's business left to settle in the postseason,

and he's hopeful for the future of a young team.

"We haven't won [the NESCAC] since 2006 ... so I think that is the goal, and the only goal," Ritch said. "I'm hoping we get to host a play-off series here in Middlebury, it'd be pretty awesome to see everyone down at Forbes. That's one of my goals, too. To play in a playoff series at home in front of friends and family, it'd be a pretty special moment."

The Panthers have a real shot at giving fans a special postseason run, leading the league in nearly every offensive category as well as team pitching stats like ERA, strikeouts and opponent batting average.

Looking to finish the season strong, Ritch and the Panthers play Wesleyan this weekend before wrapping up the season with away games against Mitchell College and Castleton University.

Women's tennis sweeps weekend, charges toward playoffs

By LEXI LINAFELTER
Staff Writer

Women's tennis (11–4) kept its foot on the gas pedal this weekend, recording consecutive shutout victories against Connecticut College (2–13) and Trinity College (5–10) in Connecticut.

At #1 doubles, Amy Delman '24 and Gena Huang '24 breezed through their competition, taking home a 8–5 win against Trinity and a 8–1 victory over Connecticut College. Sahana Raman '25 and Claudia Miller '25 also recorded consecutive victories in doubles this weekend, winning at the #3 and #2 spots, respectively. Brinlea La Barge '23 and Sami Remis '24 also took home a doubles victory on Saturday, while Nora Dahl '22 and Nina Farhat '25 won together on Sunday.

In singles play, the Panthers

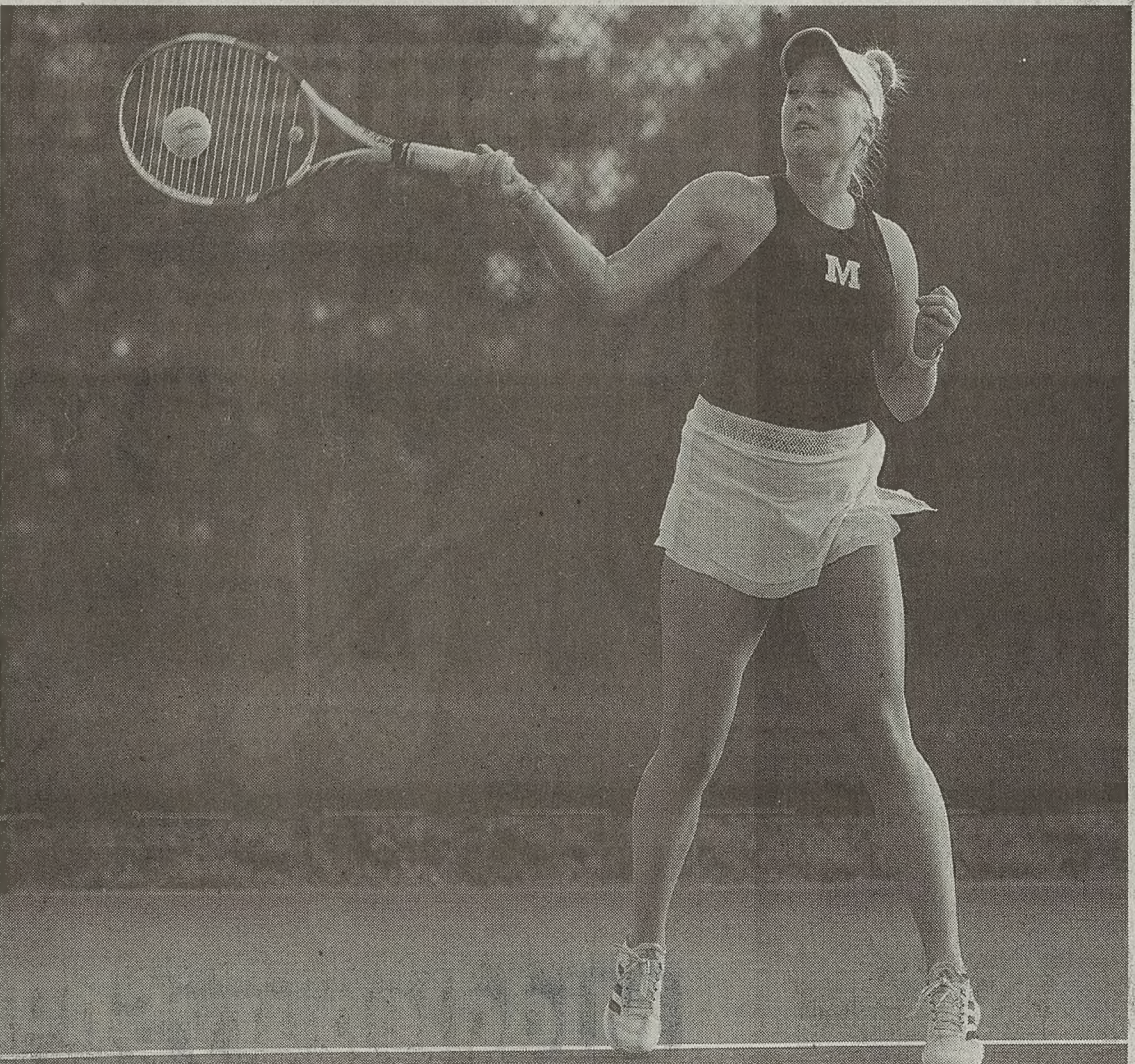
refused to drop a set this weekend, with Raman, Remis, Delman, La Barge, Miller, Caitlin Neal '23, Amanda Frank '23.5 and Kavina Amin '24 all earning victories. Notably, Raman recorded her 20th victory of the season this weekend.

Frank credited the team's belief in their training and general preparation for their victories.

"We have done so well under pressure so far this season, and for the rest of the season there definitely is going to be a lot of pressure," Frank said. "But we feel pretty confident in our games and feel like it's going to go well for us."

The Panthers will celebrate senior day on Saturday, when they take on Colby College at 2 p.m. on the Proctor Tennis Courts. The following day, the Panthers will close their regular season with a duel against Bowdoin College, also at 2 p.m.

Editor's Note: Brinlea La Barge '23 is a news editor for The Campus.



COURTESY OF COLIN BOURQUE

Brinlea La Barge '23 won at #2 doubles and #1 singles against Trinity College this past Saturday.

FREELANCE FILMMAKER: ALUM CONVERSATION WITH NATHANIEL BROWN '13

By YINUO WANG
Multimedia Contributor

Nathaniel Brown '13 majored in International Politics and Economics with an East Asian focus and is now a freelance filmmaker and photographer. He received a Fulbright Scholarship after college. He has since traveled around the world making documentaries with subcultural communities, including in the United States, Siberia, Indonesia and China.

Q: Please introduce a few of your current projects and describe a typical day of work as a freelance filmmaker now.

A: I mostly work in the documentary sphere. As a freelance artist, my time is evenly split between actually shooting, editing, and developing new work. Currently, I am working on a couple projects. One is a performance piece in Indonesia and a documentary piece which is somewhat about climate change, and then [I'm] working on a piece in New York with a dancer who dances in ballroom. And then we have some pieces coming out: one, a documentary done about spirituality in Siberia, and then another piece about garment workers in New York.

Q: What projects do you usually film, and how do you choose them?

A: The majority of projects,

and the ideal, would be all projects that I develop and choose myself from topics that I am interested in. In reality, I think a lot of documentary or all kinds of creative work is a balance of pieces you're commissioned for. And, a lot of the sustaining work in terms of financially often comes from commissioned work, which you may have less of a creative say in — I'm probably working as a director of photography [in these pieces]. I try for it to be a 50-50 balance of my own personal projects and projects that other people have brought to me. And I think that drew me to film in the first place because. I really enjoy the collaborative nature of working on films.

Q: You have worked in Indonesia, Siberia, and different provinces in China. Have you planned to travel around, or it just happened to be? What's the best part about this? The most regretful?

A: So, I don't know necessarily that I planned to travel to the places that I did in particular, but sometimes what amazes me about film and documentary in particular is I love to travel and I love to talk to people about their experiences, but often it feels like you don't have legitimacy or an excuse to do that. You can go to a place and you can really say like: Oh, hey, I'm doing this documentary; do you have two hours to sit down me? or a day? or a week? I want to learn about things that I don't know about, or [things] that I maybe know about tangentially, or I've researched, but I want to know about them in the flesh, and ... actual lived experiences. In terms of regret, it's tough to struc-

ture and it's tough to self motivate, and it's tough to get financing. I think that's the necessary evil in the whole process.

Q: Is your current job that you imagined when you were in college?

A: It is not at all what I imagined myself to do when I was younger, or when I was at Middlebury, for that matter. I took a year off before Middlebury that really excited me about traveling and it's not like I totally didn't think that this would be something that I would enjoy, but I just didn't necessarily even consider it as a possibility, frankly. I got a Fulbright grant after Middlebury and it's so open ended. The subject that I was dealing with, which was young ceramicists in China, was so visual, and I had a camera that had very basic video recording capabilities. And from that experience, I realize that this is actually really interesting, and actually viable as a route.

Q: What is Fulbright? How is it beneficial to you? Did the Fulbright scholarship encourage you to become a filmmaker?

A: The Fulbright is a scholarship or fellowship through the U.S. State Department that sponsors students, or kind of teaching assistants that go abroad to either work in a school or do a research project that is kind of self-motivated. And I was a research scholar. I chose a subject working with young ceramicists in this town Jingdezhen, which is known for porcelain in China and is the birthplace of porcelain in the world. It's really a monu-

mental program and totally life changing in a lot of ways, because I feel like there's very few times, especially when you've just graduated school, that you're given almost free rein and a monthly salary to say: hey, you're interested in this thing? Why don't you just take a little more time with it? The Fulbright just kind of gave me a blank slate and said: hey, you know, you're good enough to try out anything that you want in this period of time, and we trust you, and we know that you care. So just give it a shot. I think [that] is almost even more valuable than any directed encouragement that I could have gotten at the time. Coming out of Fulbright, and even doing the documentary, I wasn't sure that I wanted to be a documentary filmmaker. I did a bunch of different freelance work ... and a bunch of different things concurrently, until filmmaking and photography rose to the top as the preeminent priority out of all these other things.

Q: From a Middlebury student to a Fulbright Scholar, and now a freelance filmmaker, what supports you along the way and motivates you to become who you are today?

A: The major motivating factor or the deciding factor, interestingly enough, in terms of deciding a career, was how I felt when I was doing that thing. Early on, during some of the first documentaries — and especially one documentary that I mentioned, which we did in Siberia — the feeling that I got when I was making that documentary... I had never experienced something like that. And it was so energizing, and invigorating, just

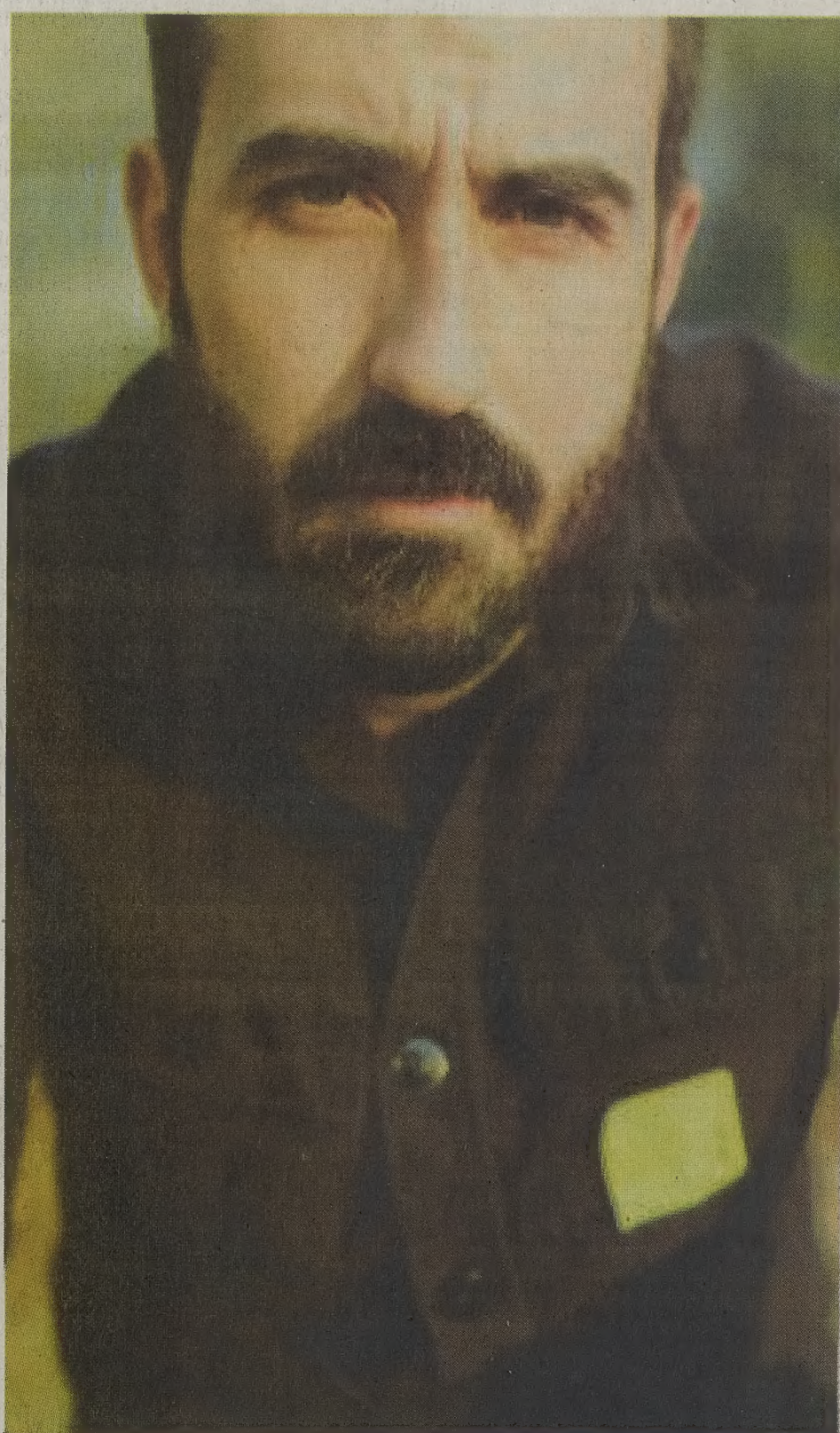
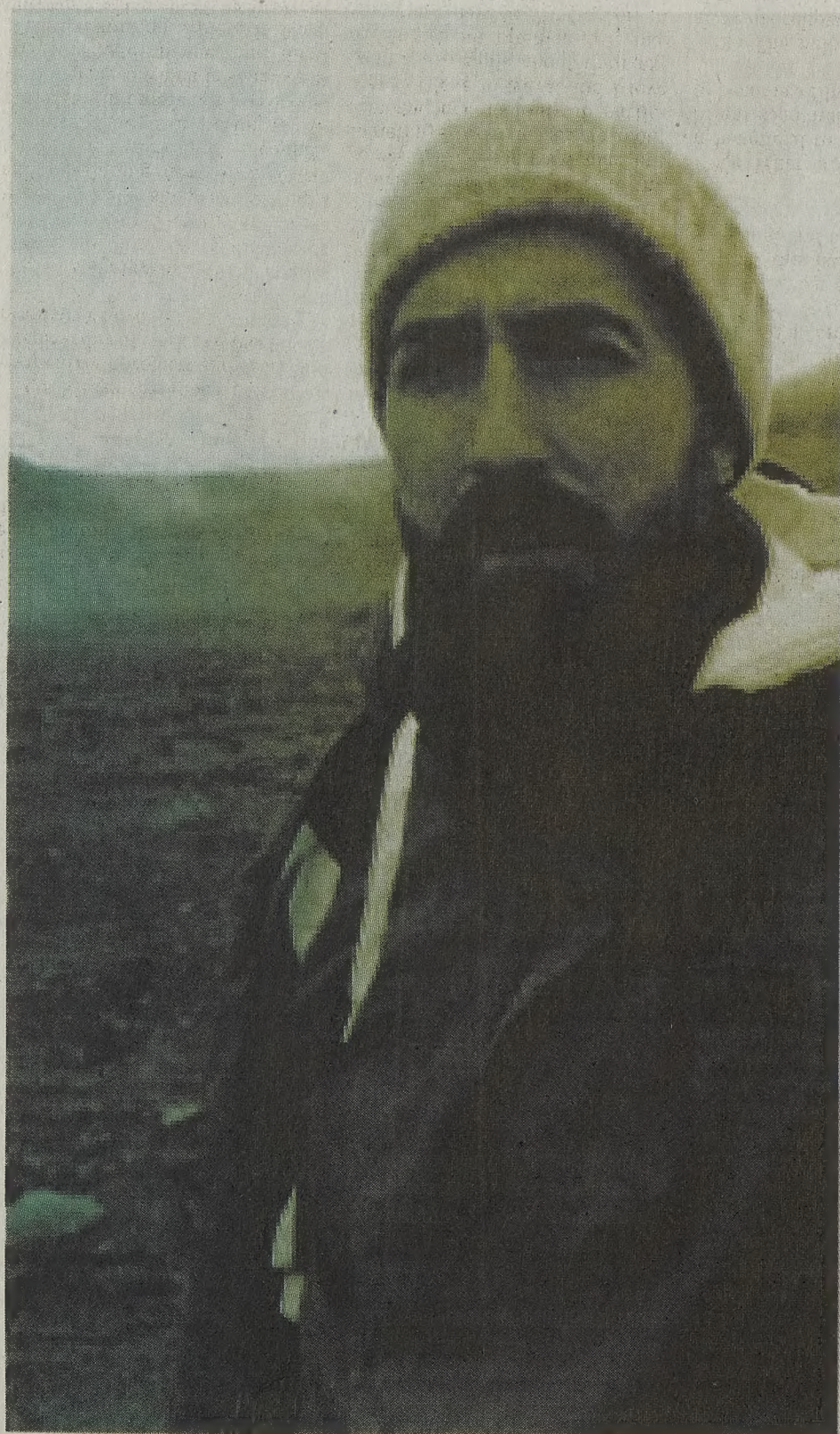
felt like: wow, this is what I need to spend my time doing. And I just let that guide me and said: okay, well, you know, if life is about using a set amount of time to do something, I might as well use my time to do this.

Q: Would you say that becoming a freelance filmmaker right after college was a courageous decision for you? How did you prepare for this?

A: Freelance is absolutely a tough balance, honestly. It's not impossible. How I first attempted it, essentially, [is] I gave myself an ultimatum: like, you have a year, and you can try it out being freelance. And if I fail, and I don't have enough money to pay my bills or [it's] just barely enough, then I can get a full time job. What is very possible is to make a sustainable living; that's totally doable. I think the most challenging thing of freelance, if you're creative, is not necessarily making a living, but it's making the kind of work that you want, or making the life that you want.

Q: Lastly, please share some of the most memorable moments as a student in Middlebury.

A: I always love the very start of fall when you first get to campus and the very early spring right at the end of every year, where everybody would be outside and have a chance to explore. I think I just really enjoyed quiet moments with a lot of people that I really cared about. And what I will say is my favorite part about Middlebury was probably just conversations that I had with my peers and friends.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Nathaniel Brown '13 spent his Fulbright Scholarship studying ceramicists in Jingdezhen, an experience which sparked his interest in filmmaking as a career.